

TIME AND CHANCE



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TIME AND CHANCE.

VOL. II.

TIME AND CHANCE

A Novel

BY

MRS. TOM KELLY.

“Fate, Time, Occasion, Chance, and Change. To these
All things are subject but eternal Love.”

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. II.

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BOOK II.

HAZARD AND DEATH.

“And thy heaven that is over thy head shall be brass,
and the earth that is under thee shall be iron.

“The Lord shall make the rain of thy land powder and
dust: from heaven shall it come down upon thee, until
thou be destroyed.”

DEUTERONOMY.

TIME AND CHANCE.

CHAPTER I.

THE LIVES OF THE SAINTS.

“So may ye gaine to you full great renowne,
Of all good ladies through the worlde so wide.
And haply in her harte finde highest rowme
Of whome ye seeke to be most magnifide!
At least eternall meede shall you abide.”

SPENSER.

THE numerous guests who had remained all night at the Castle departed after luncheon, and the evening which

followed the ball found the small party more or less tired and dull. Sir Dallas's absence and Ingha's shortened visit were the apparent reasons for general depression.

Kerinvean went to the library after dinner, and the young people strolled up and down the gallery, where a wood fire had been lighted for the first time that autumn. Ere long, Ruy and Ingha were left to their own resources, and they lingered near the big stove over which hung the picture of the ill-fated David Montgomerie.

Ruy had lately been searching in different records of the lives of the saints for a full account of Saint Cecilia, of whom Ingha had often spoken. The

idea that she herself resembled in mind and person the fair saint who had fired her imagination continually recurred to him. Since the time of Ingha's going had been fixed, an indefinable dread had taken possession of him lest this devout disciple of so exalted a saint might, like her ideal, shrink from an earthly union.

Ingha's beauty was her dominant perfection, but it was not merely of form and feature. It appeared to Ruy to personate an inspired purity and simplicity that had hitherto seemed impossible to humanity. Her wondrous gift of song, that thrilled his soul as nothing save Nature had ever done before, also allied his beloved in his thoughts with her whom the Church cen-

turies ago had worshipped as "The Queen of Harmony."

Would Valerian's fate be his? Would Ingha's devotion to Art, to any cause, preclude the possibility, even the desire of an earthly union? Would an inward voice, when the pleadings of frail human passion took the form perchance of ideal joy and hope, bid her "be silent and wait" till even a higher decree be revealed? Ah, why should Ruy torture his peace with these strange forebodings? When such love as his sways the soul, the object is exalted into a sphere above the lover, and he ever deems that the maiden he fain would woo and win will have to stoop out of some far heaven of his imaginings to ally her fate with his own.

Ruy almost envied Valerian his pagan descent; he, too, would gladly have learned his creed from the lips of his beloved, and martyrdom would have been hailed serenely, and sternly endured, if Ingha's voice, singing canticles to their Lord, could have saluted his dying moments. Thus was he thinking and feeling during the last days of her sojourn in his home, and thus it was that he had been somewhat silent in the hours when Ingha and he were surrounded by others.

The fitful flames of the odorous pine-wood played over Ingha's pale face, and made her white gown rosy in its blaze.

"How lovely your dress looks in the firelight," said Ruy. "I have seen the

same sheen on Veurnish at sunrise, when Veurnish was covered with snow; your 'silken tissues' are quite as glistening. But tell me," he went on, smiling questioningly, as if not sure of the answer, "you don't wear sackcloth beneath them, do you?"

"Please don't speak slightly of her penance," pleaded Ingha. "I am not worthy to be compared with her. Were worship of saints in our religion, I would ever invoke the invisible protection of my Saint Cecilia."

"I agree with every word you have said. I only differ in a syllable." Ruy smiled as he added, looking down on the earnest face beside him, "I would prefer for this life, and for all that may follow,

the *visible* protection of my God-elect and most beloved saint."

"But you will find," went on Ingha, still jealous for the fame of her ideal, "that in the accounts of her history, even while she lived, 'an *invisible* moral elevation' separated her from her companions. And, now that she is really as the angels, I would be content with the benediction of her ministrations, though she remained invisible to me. I think if she impelled one's work, 'the science of the soul,' Cecilia's art, which in her was pure inspiration, might be consecrated anew."

"Yes! I can imagine no inspiration more forceful than hers would be," said Ruy, abstractedly. "Saint Cecilia was

swayed to sing her divinest music because she realized the invisible presence of one who whispered to her to keep herself pure for the divine union ; but, alas ! Valerian's love could not live side by side with another."

" Ah ! but Valerian died a martyr for the cause in which her songs had instructed him, and surely that was a nobler fate than living in idle luxury and pagan pleasure as her husband !"

" But," asked Ruy, incredulously, " do you think his ' Morituri te Salutant ' found hope in the canticles she sang ? Does it not seem to you that one unsuppressed human token of a love like his own would have upborne his spirit more joyfully

through the persecutions of martyrdom?"

"Oh! no," said Ingha, warmly, "Cecilia's songs were in praise of a more deathless love than even Valerian's, and they inspired him with an enduring courage. I am sure she loved him devoutly, eternally, but from the first she foresaw that the path marked out for them, through much tribulation, would lead soonest to the life where love would be crowned, and I think that Valerian's unswerving faith in his wife was one long mournful ecstasy of salutation for that death which they both regarded as the ratification of their eternal union."

" 'Morituri te Salutant,' " answered Ruy,

“has always before seemed to me to be the refrain of pagan heedlessness of death, never to have been capable of even suggesting hope to a soul that was to be left behind.”

“Ah! but if one whom you loved were about to die, there would be no gleam of hope anywhere if you saw Death approaching unrecognized and dreaded by her. But if your loved one bravely saluted you and Death, you would feel that the separation would be only for a brief moment, just till the tide of time rolled back, and the waves of eternity flowed in.”

Ingha paused for a few moments, then her eyes suddenly brightened as if she saw a vision, and she said :

“ Ah ! how I wish some great maestro would essay to paint Saint Cecilia, or to carve her story. What a vast subject for one who feels it !—the wondrous beauty, the mysterious sorrow, the profound love, and the deathless hope ! I have looked for this, but only in music have I found it. I am sure Valerian must have seen it all in Cecilia’s face when he was dying ; and the memory of its unutterable emotion could never have left his thoughts till she too had joined him in the life where love’s crown is won.”

And Ruy vowed all silently that, if ever power came to him, he would essay the vision she described, and the face would be no other than her own.

“ Ingha,” said Ruy, after a pause, it

was the first time he had called her by her name, and he uttered it very gently as if its sacredness would hallow his invocation; her eyelids drooped with a glad surprise while her face flushed for a moment deeper than the pine-blaze dyed it, and anon became white with rapturous emotion. “Ingha, will you always be the kind of friend you have proved to me here? I do not ask yet for more than you have bestowed already, but life would be quite vacant now without the memory of it, and, if your inspiration were not to abide, I do not know how I could reach any ‘glorious port.’ Dare you promise to give me the same trust and friendship always, Ingha?”

At first she could find no words, but

Ruy stood looking down on her in silence, waiting; then she held out her hand and said softly :

“I cannot help trusting you, and I think I can promise to be faithful.”

Ruy took her hand, bent over and kissed and then released it, and they stood there with full hearts and throbbing pulses. Anon, Ruy hummed involuntarily the refrain of the song Ingha had sung for him at the river :

“Yet I must cross the seas, my love,
Where no one shall me know.”

He was not thinking of the words, nor of the purport of the ballad, but to Ingha they seemed prophetic to-night.

“Don’t,” said she, her grey eyes full of

tears, "please don't hum that song. Shall we go to the others now?"

"Yes, if you wish," answered Ruy, "but I was not thinking of them; only of you, only of you, my beloved."

Though no rights were asked, their faith was solemnly pledged, and life glowed now with richer hues, and its heavy shadows were unseen in this new glory, and the gloom of the coming years was unperceived.

Stay! stay! ye trustful hearts that dream of neither doubt nor change; there is prophetic writing on the wall, could ye but discern, and it bodes a sorrow that only love can conquer; there are portentous clouds in your horizon, though ye think there are but stars of hope in the

undimmed blue above, and that all are within your reach ! It is your day of grace, and vacant, dreary years are hastening on towards you, when alas ! ye shall look back questioningly in vain to this night for the vow that hovered and was not uttered, for the troth that bound but was not sworn.

Ah, me ! how constraining and secure are some unspoken promises, and yet how the lonely heart pants for the memory it cannot find, the one word more that would have made a glad waiting, of the proud silence that Fate will not break, and which grows more and more desolate as the years increase.

There was a goodly number in the Castle pew on Sunday, Archie among the

rest. He lost himself in contemplation of Miss Mackenzie in a new light, though anon, when the thought of Ruy's future occurred to him, he put his hand to his eyes as if from sudden pain.

Ingha sat very still during the sermon; one glance at Ruy as the text was delivered, and then her wistful eyes caught sight of an outline of hills, and she wondered if it would ever be the same any more, if her friends would ask her to spend another month at Kerinvean, and would the group be unchanged; would Chum wait at the door till the service was over next year? There was nothing in the summing up of the new associations of her life which Ingha forgot to-day. And Peter stood bare-headed by the old wicket at the

churchyard, waiting for her to pass ; he knew she was going on the morrow, but language failed him when Ingha held out her hand and bade him “good-bye.”

“What could I say?” he spoke in confidence to the housekeeper, concerning his valediction, “gin it had been ‘God bless ye,’ it would ha’e been a vera repetition o’ His doings, for He has blessed her in His ain way. She’s just ane o’ the elect; ye ken it by her singing o’ the Psalms of Dawvid, wha himsel’ was a singer and a minstrel upon stringed instruments. To hear her lilt oot the paraphrases would ha’e made Saul himsel’ gie ower his gloom. Her voice isna like a mavis’s nor a lassie’s, but just siccan a sound as ye’d think a snawdrap would ha’e could ye hear it

praisin' the Lord, and mindin' Him of a' the bonnie neuks He made, no ane o' them uncared for, however far awa' doon the lochs atween the glens."

Ruy drove with Kerinvean and Ingha to Kilane, and, while his uncle and the Marchesa were exchanging a few last words apart, Ruy said :

"I hope my Saint Cecilia will not long remain invisible to her devoted disciple !"

"You will be in town soon?" asked Ingha.

"Yes," answered Ruy, smiling, "but people in town don't always meet, and the invisible moral elevation separates sometimes most effectually."

"But it will not separate us," said

Ingha, bravely trying to hide her tearful emotion with loving smiles, "I think you have read the account of my saint too literally, and your memory is wofully retentive."

"It is only so retentive that, though I have lived twenty-one years, I seem to have been born but a short month ago. The study of the lives of the saints, the life of my saint, now absorbs all my thoughts, and they will retain no memory of her that will not be eternal !"

And Ruy waved adieu to her who had become the one star in the heaven of his desire. And Ingha, in full recognition of all at which his words only hinted, in the eloquence of her gaze, smiled a blessed answer to his unspoken prayer, and the

moment of farewell seemed to them both the opening of the gates of Paradise.

But the gates of Paradise can close as well as open, and the eyes that have once beheld the glories they hide shall never be content with any other vision.

CHAPTER II.

THE EVE OF EXILE.

“Lord! Lord! This great airth holds a hundred things covered up for them who know how to look, and do not mind digging.”

“THE GOLDEN BUTTERFLY.”

“MY DEAREST INGHA,

“I smile through my tears as I hold my pen idly when I have so much to write. Smile too, if you can, dear. Smiles are rare here now except when Miss Mackenzie, racking her memory in vain for

precedent, so that Ruy may not act despite his ancestral examples, sighs, and says : ‘ Ah, my dears, there were no African Diamond fields known in the old days when our families distinguished themselves in warfare.’ And for my part, Ingha, I wish they were still undiscovered, for Archie is going to these fields to seek his fortune ! Give line to your imagination, my dear, and picture Miss Mackenzie dispensing kooinoors to us all, for Archie says he is ‘ sure to find *lots*.’

“ Have you overcome your amazement, and would you rather not have any more surprises to-day ? One other fact I must tell you, my darling, and when I think much of it, and of what I have already written, and it is difficult to think of any-

thing else, I steal away with the Chum, under the fading trees, through the dewy moss, and come home wet and weary, feet, clothes, and eyes thoroughly drenched ! Ruy is going to Africa with Archie. He has a thousand pounds which Kerinvean gave him on the eventful thirtieth, and he thinks the money would be well spent in trying his chances there, and, when he has proved himself fortunate, he will devote himself to Art.

“ I wish we could foresee what will be the end of all these changes. Our boys are going so far ; Miss Mackenzie will be at Invean ; everybody one has regarded as stationary is about to marry. I wonder, Ingha, if you and I will waken some morning and find ourselves brides-elect ;

it would not be so bad if it made us as contented as dear old Mathilda.

“The good news from the African Diamond Fields has fired Archie and Ruy with the belief that Dame Fortune is beckoning to them to meet her there. I wonder where these Fields are, Ingha; we shall have to examine our maps, and mark the spot which the latitude and longitude indicate, for they are described as being situated quite apart from any settlement, and surrounded by desert.

“Now I have told you all I know of the destination of our voluntary exiles; nothing is definitely arranged save the fact of their intention to go; as a Montgomerie ‘canna swerve,’ and Campbells ‘darna gae back,’ they will not change their resolve. Miss

Mackenzie will talk as if they were on their *grand tour*, and we, we will not speak much about them ; they will be so very, very far !

“ Yours ever,

“ MARIE.”

This letter was but a phase of the bewildering regret which Marie was now experiencing, and when Ingha came to the end of the epistle, it fell to the ground as she put her hands over her eyes and murmured :

“ A Montgomerie canna swerve. Oh, my king, my king, I know you will go !”

But Ingha spoke no word of regret to anyone, for the Hope that ruled her was invincible to dread and fear.

At this time one could hardly glance at

a newspaper without one's attention being arrested by a paragraph narrating some enormous find, or the incredible prices given for stones which were the rewards of the slightest amount of labour. For men with small capital and good health, in the early days of the African diamond diggings, there were surely inducements enough, especially if, beyond the amassing of money, there was aim of better sort as in the case of Montgomerie and Campbell.

When Kerinvean informed his nephew of his intended marriage, Ruy was greatly surprised, though he warmly congratulated his uncle ; but when arrangements for the future were spoken of, he firmly refused to entertain Kerinvean's proposal that he should remain at the Castle. He

knew that the social life of the family must necessarily undergo change, and he knew also that his presence might be irritating to the Marchesa, and concluded that under any circumstances his duty was to make a career for himself, independent of the hopes that had always been held out to him as heir of the fair lands of Kerinvean.

Ruy and Archie had consulted much about the proposal that they should go to the Cape together, but it was not until Miss Mackenzie had accepted his father's offer that Archie spoke of his departure to Mr. Campbell, and then both the young men were eager to set off. Kerinvean had at first feebly objected, but the Marchesa wrote to him approving of Ruy's deter-

mination, so her devoted lover acquiesced.

When the folk knew that their young master was going abroad, it was observed that old Peter followed Ruy almost as persistently as Chum was wont to do.

“Gin I was young, gin I was young,” old Peter was overheard saying to himself more than once, and no one doubted his desire to go with Ruy wherever Fate decreed. He avoided speaking of the departure till the time drew near, hoping that something might hinder it; but one evening, seeing Ruy alone, he said :

“You’ll be coming doon to spier about foreign lands frae me afore ye ha’e quite made up yer mind to gae awa’.”

He spoke in a hesitating manner, for he

knew that Ruy's answer might doom him to utter loneliness even here where he had spent so many happy and contented years.

"I have decided, Peter," said Ruy, "and our berths are taken in the steamer 'Denmark.' It is Clyde built, and is a really fast ship."

"Clyde built," responded the old man, "that sounds a vera fine character, but I ha'e seen mony a feckless job launched doon the Clyde; the river's no responsible for a' that she carries on her breest, nor for some o' the skellums wha fa' intil't. But it's a *steamer* that'll tak' ye awa', a thing wi' wheels and steam instead o' braw masts to haud oot the sails to the winds o' Heaven, and gin she has but a sma' flaw

in her shaft, or a tinkered bit steel in her rods to gar her mak' a wrang clink, she'll maybe foonder ye a'thegither, and wha'll tak' tent 'o' ye when ye're oot o' reach o' Clyde signals, and bonnie Clyde laddies that wad coont life well spent in saving a fellow-creature."

"We haven't thought of calamity connected with our voyage, and I hope it will be over in twenty-eight or thirty days."

"Sax thoosand miles in twenty-aucht days! Dinna tempt the Almighty. He didna mean mankind to gae fra ae pairt o' the airth til the ither sae fast, or He wad ha'e gi'en us wings, and no ha'e divided the land by watter. It canna be done wi' safety, laddie, and foreby I'm thinking ye'd be aboot as near yer mark to set oot wi'

the intention o' spending some time by the way, for whiles it maun be done though ye do gae in a steamer."

The evening before departure, Ruy sought Peter's cottage, where he found the old man sitting at the window with an open book on the table before him, but he was not reading, for the light was fading, but over the peak of Veurnish a star glittered, and Peter's eyes were gazing abstractedly at the mountain top.

"Oh, you haven't taken to novels, Peter?" said Ruy, after a few words of greeting, recognising the book on the table. "I thought you objected to them on principle."

"So I do, Master Ruy, so I do. The de'il himsel's in a' thae trash o' novells,

but this is a buik o' different stamp; nae novells for me, Master Ruy."

"What is it?" asked Ruy, taking the offered volume, and smiling as he read aloud on its title-page "The Fortunes of Nigel, by Sir Walter Scott."

"Oh, it's a buik I foond in the house-keeper's room, and she bad me tak it to keep me frae wearin' in the dreerness o' the lang forenichts; it's a' aboot the fortunes o' ane Nigel, a mighty fine chiel, and a countryman o' our ain."

Rue did not disillusion the old man, for he knew that his usual mental recreation consisted in nothing more enlivening than Fox's "Martyrs," Baxter's "Saints' Rest," or Boston's "Forefold State," though his leisure now seemed to be spent in a com-

paratively profound literary degradation, and voluntary, though unconscious, dissipation.

“How bright that star is over Veurnish,” said Ruy, and Peter, whose heart was full of a dull pain all for Ruy’s sake, responded :

“I ha’e watched it for forty year, Master Ruy, ay oot o’ this window, and there ha’e been times when I thocht I could see mair intil’t than I could tell ye ; but that’s no to the point. There ha’e been changes while I ha’e watched, and whiles when I hadna heart to luik sae far, I aye kenned it was glintin’ there, nae change in her for a’ the rags o’ clouds that ha’e whirled aboot under her. When I was dour and lonely she aye sang the same, and mony’s

the day it has cheered me. It's just a wee verse frae Daniel that ye'll maybe find comfort in yersel', when ye canna see sun nor stars, laddie, and the lilt's just this: 'Stand in thy lot till the end be!' We ken, if the Almighty could mak' sic a changeless thing as yon star, just for His ain glory, He could do greater things, and He'll no weary o' His grand purposes concerning us, however muckle we gae backwards and forwards."

Ruy was silent for a few moments, but he drew his chair nearer the old man, and laid his hand on his and said:

"You have been always a true friend to me, Peter; God knows I am grateful."

"Oh, my bairn! my bairn! dinna speak

o' that ; ye wadna, gin ye kent hoo the desire of my eyes is being ta'en awa' ; but He'll mak' it up ae day. He borrows, but pays again a hundred-fold. It'll be sair times for the lands till ye come again, and there'll be mony an ill word spak o' the cause, and mony a prayer for yer father's son to be brocht to his ain ; but I'se no see it, though I'd be blithe to be at yer hame-coming. Yet wha kens ? there'll be a mair glorious hame-coming when yer wark here is done, and I'se welcome ye then, if it be the Lord's will !”

Ruy pressed the old man's hand, but could not trust himself to speak.

“I maunna keep ye here the nicht, for ye ha'e to mak' preparations. Come back soon to the folk that lo'e ye, Master Ruy,

and the snawdrap that'll pine gin ye bide lang awa'. Fare ye weel. The Lord gi'e ye courage and peace."

"Gin I was young! Gin I was young!" sighed the old man, when alone, even till sleep overcame him, and his dreams too were haunted by the same vain lament.

"Si mihi, quæ quondam fuerat,
. . . . si nunc foret illa juventa!"

said Entellus, and alas! the wish therein expressed has been the universal moan of the aged in every language of the world.

CHAPTER III.

GOOD-BYE, SWEETHEART.

He was a brave and modest youth,
He didna kiss each lass he saw,
And only ance the lass he lo'ed,
And that was when he gaed awa'.

AND meanwhile?
In the still November afternoon
Miss Mackenzie and Marie sat by the
fire in the drawing-room of the Castle.
Marie was on the rug with her head on
her friend's knee, when Archie's appear-
ance suddenly broke their reveries.

The arrangements had all been made, the packing completed; there was nothing forgotten for Ruy and Archie, of all that loving thought, and childish inexperience in such matters, could suggest.

Archie had been expected that afternoon, and yet, when he arrived, there passed but the briefest greetings between the three.

"Where is Ruy?" Archie asked, after a pause, no one volunteering any other subject.

"Gone to see old Peter," answered Mathilda, still carefully avoiding a hint of the object of both visits.

"I wish it were all over now," said Archie.

"Yes, dear, I know you do."

These two comprehended each other, and had fallen naturally into homely ways of conversing.

“I would like to have waited for your wedding, Mathilda, but every month makes our chances less ; we’ll try to keep the first anniversary of it together ; I suppose we shall be millionaires by that time,” and Archie forced a smile to finish his prophecy.

Not a word from Marie ; she had not moved since Archie arrived, but as if the strain of silence were too great for her, when a pause again occurred, she rose, and Archie saw that her eyes were strangely bright and eager as she spoke.

“ Archie,” she said, “ you have forgotten

your violin, and fate meant that you should use it here to-day, so come and let us have one more practice together."

" I can't play in tune to-night, Marie, I feel sure I can't ; besides, we have so much to talk about."

" Have we ?" said Marie, somewhat bitterly, "*you* don't seem to be brimming over with suggestions for conversation. I got quite tired waiting to hear if either of you would say anything that had any significance. I want you to try the difficult passage in the 'Musette,'" and she pointed to a score on the pianoforte.

Archie took up his violin, and at length got it in tune. Miss Mackenzie left the room, and the duet began ; but, ere the third line was ended, Marie threw the

score on a table, and went to the window, saying :

“It’s wasting time, Archie ; you can practise it to-morrow when you won’t have me.”

Archie laid aside the poor fiddle, and followed to the window, where Marie stood looking out on the gloaming.

“It’s getting dark,” said Archie, after a pause.

“It *is* dark,” responded Marie, in a tone which dismissed the subject of weather from Archie’s mind.

“I had a letter from Gore to-day,” he said at length, trying to find conversation.

“I hadn’t,” was the reply.

“He says he has half a mind to get leave and go with us.”

“So have I,” went on the girl, whose reckless words were prompted by an unreasoning presentiment of sorrow.

“He says also that he hopes the Marchesa will have a fit before we sail.”

“So do I,” echoed Marie.

“But that, if we really go this week, he will either join us at Southampton, or follow soon and go up to the interior for a year or two.”

“And marry a Zulu or a Hottentot, and who’ll care?” said Marie, and then there was silence.

Will he not say one word to me, not ask a single question, when he knows so well, so well? were Marie’s thoughts. Archie stood beside her apparently calmly regard-

ing the scene from the window, but in his heart too was a great longing for one word to take with him into the uncertain future, ay, into eternity itself, if he were fated never more to come back to her; but he had tutored himself into waiting; he had known this struggle would come, and, though the temptation was strong, yet he was not all unprepared, and his hope was that her freedom would matter little if she loved him, for this was not a time to woo.

The hour of grace came quickly to an end with Kerinvean, and then arrived Ruy, and, after some final arrangements, Archie had to return to Invean. Everyone tried to be cheerful except Marie, and she maintained a bewildered silence as he

bade them farewell, and they all watched him from the hall door ride out into the night.

Then Kerinvean asked Ruy to go to the library ; Miss Mackenzie went to her own boudoir, and suddenly a thought seemed to break on Marie. She went quickly to her room, threw a shawl round her, descended a side staircase, and she went also out into the night.

She knew she could reach a place which Archie must pass, by going across the lawn and through the trees ; and there she might see him without his knowledge. Although an increasing longing possessed the girl to have one word of farewell for herself alone, and a presentiment of its need in the coming days, she did not

mean to speak to him; even in the madness of her vain desire, she would have scorned such a thought as unmaidenly; but, loving Archie as she did, once more to see him, even in the moonlight, once more to be near him for a blissful moment while he rode unheeding by—Ah! the tiniest drop to such a thirst is a glorious boon—and Marie sought no more.

She remembered the years of her childhood as she hurried over the wet grass, how Archie had been her hero ever since then, how he had always been so chivalrous towards her; and, as she scrambled through the faded bracken to reach her hiding-place, she recalled years of untiring service and devotion utterly unselfish. At length she came to the spot near the bridle

path, where she waited and listened, and her heart beat fast as her one little last glimpse of Heaven approached.

Marie had forgotten that Scamper, Archie's colley, was with his master, and that he never missed an opportunity of proving how truly he deserved his name; and, as Archie's mood was so serious to-night, Scamper's only enjoyment consisted in dancing in and out of the hedges and shrubs, and putting to fright all the sleepy squirrels that at sundown had ceased to be wary. Archie's horse took no notice of Scamper; he usually disdained to evince the slightest cognizance of the dog's gambols, and only at rare intervals would he pretend to sport with him. Not having received his customary caress after stand-

ing quiet while Archie mounted, he was still wondering about the lack of it, so Scamper had tried in vain to get any fun out of him.

But Scamper's turn came now, and he was not to be balked by man or horse ; when he came to the spot where Marie stood he darted to her at once, and began barking, and careering round her, in irrepressible gaiety.

“Don't, Scamper, don't, dear Scamper ; go away, go away !” whispered Marie, entreatingly, in great confusion.

“Down, Scamper, down ; what's up with you ?” said Archie, as the dog yapped and jumped from the trees to the drive and back again. Archie leapt from his horse, fancying some one from the Castle was

trying to attract his attention, and as he listened but heard nothing, and Scamper still went on with his demonstrations, Archie fastened his bridle to a branch and followed him.

Marie saw from the first that escape was impossible, as she knew, if she ran, Scamper would follow, and so she stood still in trembling shame where Archie found her.

“ Archie, Archie, I could not help it ; I did not mean to speak to you. Oh, I am so sorry——”

“ Sorry for what ?” asked her lover, a great and sudden light breaking all the gloom of his life, “ are you sorry you are giving me the greatest joy I have ever known ?”

“ Oh, Archie !” said the girl, penitently, quick to apprehend that he had grudged her one word before, though that now when she had thrown herself involuntarily on his mercy, he was his old chivalrous self. “ I meant only to see you. I wanted you only for one short minute all to myself.”

“ And I—I want you a whole long eternity. My darling, you know that I love you.” And Archie took both her hands in his, and looked down on her tearful, blushing face. “ I have loved you always, Marie, my own, all the years we have played together as children ; and, since I lost everything but my love for you, I have often been glad that I had not told you, almost glad that you did not care

for me. Do you forgive me, my darling?"

Archie had drawn her nearer to him, but only as if to protect her in the dark. He asked no promise, offered no caress, but oh, how he rejoiced and how he struggled with his love to conceal its yearning from her. To part without compromising her in any way seemed to him fairest devotion, and then to come back and woo her if he found her free.

If he found her free! That had been his fear, but now he was at peace, and he was more jealous for her maidenly pride than for his bliss in feeling her near.

"You must go now, Marie darling," he said, "for perhaps Ruy will be seek-

ing you. Poor little night-bird! how I shall think of your sweetness when away. You won't forget that I shall think of you?"

"Forget!" said the girl, her heart strung to its utmost tension as she tried to refrain from breaking forth into expressions of the sorrow and love of which he asked nothing, and her voice trembling with emotion. "Forget! I am a Montgomerie, Archie, and as faithful as any of them in loss, or failure, or—death. You may trust me not to forget. And, Archie—dear," the proud Montgomerie features softened into an absolute prayer, "when I am recalling that you are thinking of me far away, don't let my thought be a mockery, for I'll

cling to it, whatever may come, till the end."

Archie felt he could hardly trust himself in the tumult that swayed his feelings, and, ever mindful of her, he was anxious to part.

"Go now, Marie darling, and if I'm not in luck's way after all, and some other man comes, and you know him worthy, remember you are free, little one, quite free."

While he was speaking he drew her head to his breast, and an unutterably grave tenderness came over his face, and the tone of his voice resembled that in which a man might renounce the glories and delights of life for the sacrifice of martyrdom.

"Free!" exclaimed Marie, as she drew

herself up, and in the rising moonlight he could see her eyes were filled with tears, though her voice was passionately defiant. "Free, would you say I was free, when I shall be recalling every moment of my life that you are thinking of me, that you are striving to end the struggle and come back to me? Archie, if you call that freedom, I'll exult in it, and be shielded all round by its strength. Good-bye, Archie!" She half turned as if to go away, but an impulse, wayward as her own wild heart, made her turn again to him, for one more farewell, for one more look into that brave, noble face which, now that the moon shone full and clear, showed sadder than ever she had known it before.

"Archie dear, you forgive me for coming,

you forgive me for all the trouble you have always had about me? don't you, Archie?"

"Kiss me once, darling, darling, for my great love's sake!" he said. She clung to his embrace like a bewildered child, and in silence the kiss was given, and Marie, with all her burthen of grief and hope, was left alone under the trees that moaned a low dirge for the pain no song could soothe.

CHAPTER IV.

A PATH THAT LEAVES NO TRACK.

“Thou shalt relinquish everything of thee
Beloved most dearly ; this that arrow is
Shot from the bow of exile first of all.”

TRANSLATION FROM DANTE.

READER, are you willing to go on with me ? Our course hitherto has taken us through scenes contrasting strangely with those ahead. As the calm of the lonely purple hills can environ passions that stir mankind to great disaster, so the still vastness of the solitary desert may

encompass, in a little space, ambitions which could revolutionize an empire, and oh, the vacant, pathless leagues between these arenas ! But a few miles from them, a sheep track among the heather, or the poising, whirling circles of a flock of vultures in a cloudless sky overarching a waste of sand, may be the only signs of living creature.

Will you cross these leagues to go with our heroes to Africa ? I cannot promise you a less toilsome journey than theirs, but it will be sooner over, gentle reader, yours shall be brief ; and I would bid you, ere taking the first step in a course where the successes will be all chance, and the difficulties sure, to gird on your patience, for you will sorely need it ere the end.

Peradventure you are wont to travel much, doubtless in search of novelty, and moreover splendidly equipped ; but for this expedition, where you will range a part of earth probably untrodden by you till now, neither chariot nor courier will be needed. Did we but know it, ere habit has made luxury a condition of life, a good courage that would increase by being hardily fostered, a firmer grip of the staff which supports us, a tightening of our armour, and “God help us !” would be all we would desire for the longest pilgrimage. Can ye not affirm this, ye who remember, as I too alas ! the young bright smiles which in bitterness now we recall as salutations for Death? And yet perchance happier they whose preparations were made in vain

for a lengthened warfare, than they whose threescore years have been a continual fight in which they have ever been worsted and beaten back.

Montgomery and Campbell embarked in London on board a Cape bound steamer, one that was, of course, advertised to possess every comfort and convenience which she in any remarkable degree lacked. At that time berths for Natal and the Cape in the mail steamers were taken many weeks before sailing.

The passengers of the Denmark were evidently desirous of practising economy rather than speed, and the voyage proved long and dreary, varied by a storm in the Bay of Biscay at the beginning, and a five days' gale from the south-east at the end.

Life for an enforced period—five weeks this voyage lasted—in the society of a hundred and fifty persons, from whom there is no escape beyond the limit of a few cubit feet, out of sight, but, alas! never out of hearing, has seldom proved a blissful experience, and was not calculated in this instance to be such to those whom mere circumstance and chance had brought together in an hourly contact, in which choice had no suffrage, and endurance no alternative. The Jewish element of the trafficking order was in the ascendant, and broken English and low German were incessantly screeched all day long.

Ruy and Archie made the best of it, but not so the Chum; it was altogether a despicable business to him, and so incom-

prehensible that till the last day of the voyage he maintained the same anxious, jealous, unceasing watch that never wore for a moment into apathy. Notwithstanding divers well-meant and promiscuous attempts to induce him to fraternise, the Chum would not be beguiled, and followed Ruy and Archie, rarely letting both at once out of sight. He indignantly sniffed at the leaven of the Jews ; of their biscuits pocketed at dessert he would have none ; to their pats and approvals he was alike indifferent, and when the weather became hot, too hot for the descendant of ice-berg rangers, he gave up peregrinating the ship, over the whole of which he was allowed to go as he liked. He would lie for hours under any available bit of shade,

and with his fore legs stretched out in front, on which his face rested, he would pretend to sleep, though he was ever on the alert, feeling suspicious in the unfamiliar abode, and not in the least degree assured that at any moment he and those dear to him might not fall into the hands of the Philistines.

It was an ordinary voyage, with the extraordinary discomfort usual in a crowded ship. Our heroes sometimes joined the Babel in the saloon, and were not slow to pick up any information about the country to which they were bound. They counted the hours between the meals leaden, for who, on a long voyage, with a good digestion, has failed in this? Nobody was born, nobody was married, and

nobody died, though in no community does Death make so brief an impression as in that of a passenger ship; and the proceedings were truly monotonous. There was no lack of disputation, declamation, gambling, and argument. Drinking was the chief amusement, it began daily before the sun was "over the foreyard," and never ended; and it was little wonder that the first glimpse of land was hailed with glee by those who did not share in these festive pastimes.

As the high, steep ridge of mountain which half encircles Cape Town loomed in sight, the penance of exile, inaction, seemed over. Our heroes had not yet experienced the dreary ache of long absence, nor had they spent years surrounded by

the sterile barrenness that covers the endless African deserts, nor wandered, nomad-like, in its more verdant provinces, nor had they yet tasted the keen excitement which its vast hunting-grounds can give, though one who had seen many of the glories of Central and Southern Africa, and had enriched his memory with innumerable pictures of rare magnificence, confessed that *he* could recall no more beautiful scene than Table Mountain sinking into the sea!

There were hurry and confusion enough at the dock, demonstrative recognitions and loud Malay oaths, effusive greetings, and strange, dusky faces, and when the Custom house was reached, a bland Scotchman was presiding over the incoming

tumult that pleaded and even commanded his instant attention.

The arrival of indescribable and heterogeneous baggage was quite enlivening after the tedium of the voyage. Ruy and Archie merely looked on till a lull should occur, but the Scotchman had singled them out, their tall forms always distinguishable in a crowd.

“Get oot o’ ma road,” thundered he to the throng of Jews and others who pressed round him. “Get oot o’ ma road. An’ binna ye mair mannerly, ye’ll no get yer quits the day avá.”

More by his tone than by his half-comprehended words, the rabble felt it was useless to thrust itself upon this gentleman’s attention. Your North Briton can

sometimes use his prerogative with great power, even in the meanest ranks of authority. In an altered voice, regarding his compatriots, he asked :

“Far are ye frae?”

“That wad be tellin’, but *ye’ll* be frae Stanehive,” said Archie, who found the accent irresistibly infectious.

“Far are ye frae? Far are ye frae?” asked the official, determined not to have his question again put aside by his ready countryman.

“Frae the hill-country north o’ Glasgow, an’ a bittock wast.”

“They’ll ca’ ye?”

“Campbell,” responded Archie, stooping to hide his laugh, and to open a port-manteau.

“I’ve heard that name afore. Awa’ wi’ ye. I kent ye smelt o’ heather.”

The Scotchman made a few magical chalk signs upon their various boxes, and dismissed these two fortunate passengers without examining any of their belongings. This immunity from official supervision was as welcome to Ruy and Archie as if they had possessed nothing that was not contraband.

The next comer, alas! had to expiate their exemption; he was a small, timid missionary, whose unsuspecting and multifarious packages were all as minutely examined as if their owner had upon their labels scored the brand of Achan.

CHAPTER V.

AFAR IN THE DESERT.

“Yet must I work through world and life my fate.”

OUR travellers were compelled to wait in Capetown three weeks ere they could find any kind of conveyance for the Diamond fields. The Inland Transport Company had not then secured their wonderful manager, the ubiquitous Mr. Hare of Groen Fontein, who subsequently made its waggon-travelling such a marvellous

success that seven hundred miles were regularly careered over in five or six days, and passengers allowed three nights of rest *en route*, relays of eight and ten horses being ready at every stage, and the dreary Karoo turned into a highway which was crossed in as many days as formerly it had taken weeks, and sometimes months.

Bravo for you, friend Hare! for many was the rough journey you took to smooth the way for those who gave you no thanks, and many were the scorching days that your cheeriness and infinite ingenuity lightened for those who were unused to the desert and its ways. There are men, and women too, in many parts of the earth—and some, alas! who have done

with its toilsome journeys for ever—who have still cause to remember the ring of a kindly voice, and the help of a trusty hand, when such were rare indeed; ay, even yours, Robert Hare of Groen Fontein.

At length the two friends arranged to go up to the Diamond fields with a Dutch trader, who agreed, for a specified sum, to give such accommodation to them and their baggage as could be spared from a cargo of sugar, his own private speculation. They were glad enough to avail themselves of any means of getting to their goal, and an ox-waggon, that was to be drawn part of the way by mules, seemed a promising exodus.

From the beginning they were given to

understand, for their waggoner spoke excellent English, that the bags of sugar were much more precious in his estimation than either their lives, their comfort, or their belongings; his stock of sweetness would yield eighty or a hundred per cent. at the Fields; their passage-money had been paid before starting. A Dutch trader is always an acute man; all things are subservient to his greed of gain, and his avarice is surpassed only by his stolidity.

Your ordinary Dutch waggoner has nothing to tell, nothing to suggest, nothing by which to be amused, and his attention is divided between his inner consciousness and his pipe. You may be a frank, charming fellow with whom to rough it,

apparently, ay, sincerely, interested in his cattle, his waggon, and his journey, but the dreary creature remains as hopelessly absorbed as if there were a government tax on every word he uttered. After a time his silence does not depress more than does the muteness of the oxen he drives, for in both cases experience has taught that nothing need be expected.

Seven weeks of waggon life under a burning sun that each day grew hotter, in the society of a dumb Dutchman and a Kaffir boy who yelled incessantly to his cattle, made sad havoc of even British stoicism. The food was wretched and water scarce, and the track was one which gave but few chances of sport; nothing

but a stray pau or an occasional herd of spring-bok, fleet, wild, and shy.

Sugar bags in a trekking waggon were but poor substitutes for mattresses, and, if sleep were sometimes granted, it was as surely disturbed by the harsh, discordant shrieks of the Kaffir rising over the monotonous sound of the wheels, or by the cracking of his huge sjambok, which seemed to rend the stillness with explosive showers for miles around. Often when hard-wooded sleep was almost won, the Kaffir's yells would break the spell as he apostrophised by turn each poor beast that trudged and toiled so laboriously, though not one whit faster for his jerky menace of "Dunker!" "April!" "Zulu!" and the like.

The Dutchman seemed to take pleasure in the discomfort of his passengers, and often appeared more than ordinarily satisfied when they were annoyed or provoked; and he had that propensity for practical and ingenious irritation which is developed to perfection only in the lives of born bullies.

One night while trekking with mules, of whose performance their owner was remarkably proud, his passengers were asleep, and he was driving. The mules perceived the nature of the ground before the Dutchman, who was holding the reins so loosely that they got their heads, and dashed into the dry bed of a river, where huge boulders were profusely scattered.

The Dutchman turned round on the sleepers, and called out sardonically :

“Keep your seats, gentlemen, and excuse me for wakening you ; but it’s hard on the cattle dragging a load of dead people.”

The mules took the break-neck defile, rugged bottom, and precipitous up-hill at a canter, but, notwithstanding, the waggon arrived safely on the opposite bank, much to the astonishment of all concerned ; the bruises and shaking his passengers had received yielding great satisfaction to the Dutchman.

When the approach to Griqualand became an event of near anticipation, our heroes were impatient even of the time which they lost while the oxen outspanned to feed and rest.

How many hundreds have wasted bright expectancy in that desolate region, and yet its dreary barrenness should have discouraged too brilliant hope. Nothing but solitary sameness, no landmarks, no verdure save on the immediate banks of the few streams, which more appropriately might be called river-beds, as only during the brief rainy season have they any appearance of running water, the rest of the year being stagnant or dried up altogether.

A pitiless sky, a pauseless blaze from sunrise to sunset, never a shadow of hill or cloud; broad, level lands with no echo, level as far as the eye can see, as far as thought can reach; nothing to show how far distant is the horizon, only an ending

where the vast blue sky environs the flat monotony of earth; increasing heat and glare as the traveller wends northwards, and whirling, blinding sand when the hot winds blow. Nothing to suggest beauty nor use; nowhere a hint of treasure. No trace of encouragement for those who have come to seek it, unless the seeker finds answer in the stars, and then, ah, mystery of night! what glamour over earth and sky haunts those unbounded African solitudes with thousands of stars over all the serene expanse. And who indeed fails in stilly trance to find conjectures of almost divine accomplishment whilst communing there in a tranquillity that cannot be imagined, in a peace that the clamour of the world's turmoil can never disturb?

Ruy often contrasted the nights in the desert with those on the outward voyage when his surroundings no less ministered to his poet nature: the rolling sea, over which the ship, freighted with a garrulous multitude, moved spirit-like, her bare masts rising like ghostly spectres up in the dim blue, while the stars played pitch and toss with each other.

Here change was absolute and significant to a human soul that was ever solitary, and whose impulses impelled to thought rather than to fellowship. Here he found a boundless calm with the glitter of the stars to inspire him, and nothing now seemed impossible. He grasped his desires, and in rapturous dreaming tasted the bliss of reality, and, while acknowledg-

ing that home and lands were gone from him for ever, he felt that much—ay, all that made life worth living, still was his; freedom to strain and toil in the way he had discerned to be marked out for him, and he shirked no responsibility nor dreaded any of the labour it entailed. Ruy knew he had launched his barque on dark and lonely waters, and for helm and hope he had only a single star which he had elected to follow wherever it might lead ere reaching its “glorious port.”

“Ingha!” the young man whispered, when the tumult of his feelings oppressed him, and her name stilled them as if he had heard her own voice.

“Ingha!” he said, when their great future seemed afar and he deemed his own power

to attain less than his aspirations, and the utterance brought fresh resolution to fight for her sake all untoward odds. If he failed, it would be Kismet. Ah! never because she had led him astray; no evil could ever come by Ingha.

What a strange beginning he had purposed for an art career, to have come across half the earth to labour for an indefinite time with all his might and main, holding the same tools, but perhaps not to produce as much as the poor Kaffir in his employment, the "genius of Petrarch" matched against the lowest of the human animal; in intellect hardly higher than the Chum; in devotion, unselfishness, and fealty not so high. Ruy's dreams to find their beginning of realiza-

tion in division of labour (and perchance property too) with a mind that will never soar beyond his daily "pap," save to a wonderment if his wives shall have planted his mealies now that he, their lord and master, is separated two moons from his home.

Ruy, who disdained the teaching that would have narrowed his action by the line and plummet of another's gauge, and who, listening to the divine voice that bids every soul go forth on its own solitary mission, had a pure creed by which he held fast.

He would live to be taught by his art, to work in it with a single purpose, but not to live by it till he had learnt all of which

he knew himself ignorant, and then, if at length it were possible, he would give joy through it ; but he asked now that it might yield him nothing but power. So here he had journeyed to seek the means whereby he might become a disciple.

Not yet had he entered the temple where so many strain for the prizes, and where the crowns differ so strangely : many are made of the gold that perisheth, and innumerable are the hands that reach out to grasp them ; of immortal fame that abides is the rarer diadem ; and down in the lonely aisles are the nobler ones striving for no earthly crown at all, since their Titan force and brief span of life are

needed for a service that hopes to hear in the purer air of the great Walhalla, the award, "Well done!"

Only a lictor without the gates is he who is dreaming of what shall be, he sees afar off the crowd within, and he hears the thrilling chorus of the mighty throng, when, in a pause, the grind and discordance of baser life halts. And ever when the stunning clangour of the world waits for its poets to speak, it hears of the vision it cannot apprehend, and of the echoes of the heavenly music to which it never gives ear, and thus it is that they who are gifted with imagination that either soars or sings must walk through the world aliens and exiles.

Archie, the bright, brave comrade whose

hope, endurance, and humour under all circumstances were inexhaustible, never hid from himself nor from Ruy that he had come to Africa to win back from blind Fortune that which she had so ruthlessly taken from him. And had that deity been a god instead of a goddess, he would willingly have combated with him as mortals fight in direst conflict, so great he felt his strength, ay, he would even gladly have sacrificed the first valuable stone he should find to give his imaginary foe a blow for the ugly trick which had been played upon him.

At length the long-expected glimpse of the Vaal river gladdened their spirits, and on either side of its banks were descried thousands of tents.

The scene broke upon their view like the encampment of a great army, which in reality it was, though, for the most part, composed of battalions of unrolled, undisciplined troops, of every nation, every tongue, who had gathered hither to do no battle for king nor country, nor to unfurl the banner of any heroic federation, only to wage a grim and selfish warfare against Chance, in which subaltern was as like to conquer as oldest warrior, where a wayward goddess dealt loot into vagrant and rapacious hands in which it proved a Pandora gift, and sternly denied it to ardent and resolute veterans, who, peradventure, having failed often in straining to win largesse from her, deemed that at last here in a game of hazard, where she

was umpire, they might be in luck's way, and cheat for once their implacable and pitiless fate.

CHAPTER VI.

TWO BRIDALS.

“ And sigh'd his soul toward the Grecian tents ”

SHAKESPEARE.

THERE was neither pomp nor parade in the quiet morning ceremony at the Castle, when Mathilda Mackenzie, of Cairn Douhl, became Mr. Campbell's wife. The bride's face wore the expression of serenest contentment, her soft grey satin gown accorded well with her gentle bear-

ing, and though her only jewel was the family ornament, it was less conspicuous than usual on state occasions, and only those who knew the history of the brooch would have remarked its presence, for it was almost hidden by folds of old lace, also sacred from having been the adornment of many a Mackenzie bride.

The choice of the wedding tour was characteristic; it was not to extend beyond Edinburgh, where Mathilda averred that she, being pitiably ignorant of the historical associations and antiquities of her own country, with so instructive a guide, would learn much that had been hitherto overlooked in this most delightful study.

Strangely did Steuart Montgomerie's

heart fail when the pageant of his marriage was planned; he now found the prospect of matrimony a somewhat too definite fact, his hitherto careless life had included so few experiences for which distinct arrangements had been made, for he had drifted into all his circumstances, and had never controlled them by the force of either purpose or will.

The settlements were drawn out apportioning to the Marchesa, in the event of widowhood, a jointure five times as great as was provided for by the Kerinvean entail, and for which a mortgage was raised, though the necessity for all this was so skilfully insinuated that Kerinvean suspected no selfishness, for he still thought his bride elect had not till now renewed

the marriage vow because of her waiting devotion for himself.

Her late husband's will was peculiar, and evidently had been prompted by a thorough knowledge of his wife's character. The whole income from his great personal property, with the exception of a small annual sum secured to his daughter, was left for the Marchesa's absolute use so long as she remained a widow, but in the event of that condition being broken, the mother's and daughter's positions were to be changed, the large income to revert to Ingha, to accumulate till she was twenty-three years of age, and the small annual sum to be all the Marchesa should receive. An odd settlement, but the acute perception of him who had made it had

foreseen that, so long as the mother had no more absorbing interest, her child would be well cared for, but that it was necessary for the father to anticipate matrimonial contingencies.

The Marchesa did not tell her daughter of the mutual change in their prospects, she determined to retain the communication for future advantage; she believed that, when she herself had chosen a husband for Ingha, she could so embellish the relation of her own sacrifice that it could not fail to influence her daughter's decision. She anticipated that the strong, steadfast will of her child might be amenable to a consideration of this kind, when, without it, matched against mere conventional reasons, it would have proved invincible.

During the preparations for the marriage, Ingha seemed to go about in a dream; she and Marie had scant leisure for thoughts that were not connected with the coming event.

A large and expensive house in Belgravia was secured on lease, of which the Marchesa and Kerinvean were to take possession on their return from a short tour abroad. The girls had to be presented at the Queen's first Drawing-room, and their introduction to society was deemed sufficient excuse for the outlay.

Kerinvean was not without compunction about having made no settlement for either niece or nephew. He had saved yearly a sum out of his luckless prodigal-

ity which he had meant to be Marie's fortune or dowry, but alas! he had devoted it to the purchase of a *parure* of gems, contrasted with which the Dumble-Brigworth sapphires looked exceedingly tame.

On the eve of his marriage, Kerinvean said to Marie :

“I ought to have persuaded Ruy to have remained at home. I don't see what good any of us will get by his absence.”

“Perhaps some may accrue to himself,” was the quick response.

“Doubtless,” said Kerinvean, “self-interest seems everyone's aim. I wish we were back at the Castle, child; I hate London.”

“Dear uncle,” said Marie, soothingly, “when all the fuss and excitement are over, you will not feel as you do now.”

“Perhaps not, perhaps not, child. Meantime, tell Ruy there’s always a place for him in my house, and, when some of his confounded high-flying notions have been knocked out of him, he’ll find plenty to do in the old spot, and nobody will do it better.”

This tardy recognition of his nephew’s claims, and of his own promise to Captain Montgomerie satisfied him, he had now discharged a disagreeable duty, had offered home and occupation to his heir presumptive on the eve of a ceremony which he knew would result in permanently barring Ruy out from association with himself.

“Canna swerve” was the motto of the house, but its present master’s habitual reluctance to fulfil any grave responsibilities had made him hitherto shirk even the acknowledgment of his promise of protection given so long ago. He had educated Ruy to regard himself as his heir, had on all occasions taught him that he was so, for this mode of showing kindness cost him the least amount of trouble.

Kerinvean was sometimes ill at ease as he thought of Marie’s position, and he lacked the undisturbed complacency and carelessness which his life had known till now; but his fits of gravity were short-lived, for the spell of a woman’s beauty was on his spirit, and the witchery of smiles that had

enthralled his boyhood was charming the hours with a strange and flattering delight.

“My dear Mrs. Campbell,” said Lady Kinaire to her guest for the nonce, “I have come to the conclusion that, of all the impossible idiots in this world, a well-provided for widow is the most impracticable. It always makes matters worse if she be attractive, for fools lie in wait to pander to folly, and a handsome widow is never satisfied till she does it again—I mean until she has committed another blunder, for marriage is nearly always that, unless with your romantic people, and they are so rare. No one ever made two happy marriages, it’s against nature; the very Bible denounces them. A man

will either hate the one or love the other. That isn't what I allude to, but it's true of this subject as well."

"But do you not find it romantic in Kerinvean to have been faithful in his attachment to his first love for so long a time?" asked Mathilda, timidly evading another tirade upon second marriages.

"All chance, my dear, mere inactivity and casualty. Your hero—Elinor's, I mean—has been worried into matrimony, and their old flirtation has been the string upon which she has harped; for why, Heaven only knows, unless it be that a man has always some vulnerable point at which a woman can aim to fool him to the top of his bent, and then he gets punished, here in the flesh, for his mis-

deeds. And now Ruy Montgomerie, my hero, is exiled, and his romance will have a different sequel from that which I had designed, and everything, through Elinor's insanity, will end prosaically."

Mathilda, always just, even though her feelings impelled an adverse opinion, and well knowing Ruy's fidelity could be trusted, pledged or not, replied :

"I imagine the Marchesa thinks no history could be more romantic than her own, Kerinvean having been her first love."

"Romantic, indeed !" repeated Lady Kinaire, in a satirical tone. "Very romantic to pick up a first love at the fag end of her career, marriage, maternity, widowhood, and a dozen other possible

husbands having figured in her life since they parted. I grant you Kerinvean is glamoured, but he is incapable of anything deeper; and, moreover, he, being a predestined bachelor, ought to have remained in the state Nature placed him; but Elinor, being a born fool, must needs upset everything. You doubtless perceive that I like Ruy Montgomerie infinitely better than his uncle."

"But that is no marvel," returned Mathilda. "Ruy's character combines every fine quality recounted of his ancestors."

"And Kerinvean might never have had any save for his good looks," interrupted Lady Kinaire; "it would be a just retribution on the family if, after all, Ruy

remained the heir, and brought back a Hottentot wife and a troop of black babies."

Mathilda did not pursue the conversation; perhaps she was somewhat shocked at Lady Kinaire's levity, though she half-discerned her judgment was prompted by feelings of kindest interest towards Ruy and Ingha, though no one as yet had any reason for more than conjecture with regard to their attachment, which had been as secretly kept as that of Archie and Marie.

The marriage took place notwithstanding the fears and dread its announcement had occasioned, and Lord Kinaire gave away the queenly bride.

Sir Dallas Gore, who was waiting his

leave, had strolled into the church during the ceremony, though he had declined the invitation to be a guest. Standing where he was unnoticed, his hungry eyes feasted on the vision of a white-robed girl who was all unconscious of his presence.

“Only once more!” he had pleaded with his resolve, when planning this last look, “only once more, and then good-bye ;” but when he saw her, after weeks of relentless self-subjection, he knew that no vagrant Bohemianism would ever still his longings or lessen his desire. He had manfully tried to battle with his passion, but standing there, where his hand could have almost touched hers, he would willingly have given up everything by him

possessed to have dared to claim her as his own.

What a vacant heritage to love where to seek would be sin! though in the dark gloom where Fate had placed him, a word from Marie Montgomerie would have been to this soldier as the mad excitement of leading a forlorn hope. He drew back lest she should see him, and bless him with her smile. Grace to him, strong rival toiling under alien skies! You who have vivid memories of smiles bestowed upon you in tender largesse, remember him, whose lot for lack of them is bare and dreary. Recall it with no scant honour should the hour come when you are in strait of doubt. Give him, then, his due of homage for his fealty, and forget not

how he withheld delight from his soul lest
it should engender thoughts disloyal to
you, his friend !

CHAPTER VII.

DIGGERS' DENS.

“Nature, what things there are
 Most abject in regard, and dear in use !
 What things again most dear in the esteem
 And poor in worth. . . .

O heavens, what some men do,
 While some men leave to do !
 How some men creep in skittish fortune's hall,
 While others play the idiots in her eyes.”

SHAKESPEARE.

A CANVAS house made on a wooden frame, fourteen feet by twelve, and considered capacious in the vicinity where

it had taken its stand, was the abode of Ruy and Archie, and when spoken of the word *house* was usually emphasized, as if such a habitation were a rare luxury, and the owners thereof, albeit diggers, men to be envied.

The erection had a fly outside the roof, fastened by poles and ropes, and this extra screen somewhat aided in keeping out the heat and rain, but no barricade could do this effectually during the violence of the storms; behold the interior at this moment!

A window opposite the door shows a downfall rivalling the Deluge, and the deafening noise made by it compels conversation to be carried on in shouts. In several places water is coming through

the canvas, fast filling the buckets on the floor.

Tropical rain, no doubt of it, though south of the Tropics, and five thousand feet above sea-level, but the few weeks of rain, thunder, and lightning make no sham of their downpour and storm, and little use is canvas or thatch against an anger that has been growing during nine or ten months of drought, and fierce is the wrath of the elements all round the temporary habitations of the diggers of Pniel.

Montgomerie and Campbell have lost the trim look of new-comers; their faces are bronzed, and their clothes are a good deal worn, but, under any circumstances, they could never be supposed to belong

to other than their own class. Their work had been hard and unfamiliar in its painful monotony, and, to men of attainment, the relinquishment of all former occupation which it necessitated, for an undertaking that required neither education nor skill, was depressing when success gave no stimulant.

The steadiest, strongest, sturdiest Zulu in the camp did not work under his own blazing sun with more untiring zeal than did these two whose muscular exertions heretofore had been, for the most part, achieved in sight of hills wreathed with cool, white mists, and where grey skies and fresh breezes had made physical effort as much a delight, as here the continual hot glare and barren surroundings caused

all labour to be unmitigated drudgery.

A singular disorder was visible in the house : though far too full, of useful furniture there was a woeful scarcity. A wooden stretcher took up considerable space, as did an iron bed which did duty as a chair during the day ; several large trunks, which were utilized as tables or seats as required, occupied all the rest of room available. A tin case held a few of the edibles procurable, and guns, clothes, crockery, violin case, books and papers were strewn about in the confusion which denotes the point of despair at which men arrive when heat and want of space render order an impossibility. Two or three unframed pictures adorned the walls (hints of thoughts which abode not in any dur-

ance vile), sketches by Ruy, with some slight attempt at ornament above them, horns of grotesque and varied form taken from African spoil. So thus the interior of the dwelling had a rare appearance in a community where the bare necessities of life were difficult to obtain, and where mere embellishment was regarded as waste. Few had the power of adapting and arranging their abodes; all looked upon them as temporary, and excitement prevailed too universally to allow of men settling down to study ease or elegance.

The two men were enjoying home-news. Ruy lingered longer over his sister's letter than Archie did over Mrs. Campbell's, and he was still intent upon it, when Archie,

expectant and eager, began ostentatiously and noisily to unfold the newspapers which had arrived with the mail. At length Ruy discerned his friend's wish, and handed Marie's letter to him, which, after he had read, he returned, and resumed scanning the papers, varying his perusal with snatches of song.

Ruy was generally reserved and quiet after receiving letters from home. Archie had the advantage over him in the pleasure of seeing his beloved's own handwriting, and afterwards his spirits always rose several degrees above their ordinary equilibrium. Archie's singing to-day seemed to essay to rival the volume of sound made by the storm; presently Ruy looked up from his papers, and, smiling, said :

“You seem to like to hear your own voice, Archie.”

“Like it! I should think so; many a time I’ve nearly burst my windpipe in perfect ecstasy at my own singing, though I’ll swear I never got up half that amount of enthusiasm over any other fellow’s; there’s a rapture in one’s own creations with which you, with your artistic proclivities, ought to sympathise; though, after all, a genius is never honoured by his own compatriots, therefore I need expect no appreciation from you.”

“I say, Archie, what a litter there is, couldn’t we straighten up?” said Ruy, in a tone that indicated an apology for his share of the jumble, with a desire that Archie would negative his proposal for

exertion. "While these rains last there will be no work in the kopje."

"And, while this heat lasts, no work in the house, if I know my men," answered Archie, wiping his bronzed face, and regarding his surroundings with supreme contentment. "If you like," he went on, "I will call one of the boys and make him fulfil your despotic behests!"

The Chum now got up from where he had been lying asleep, and, stretching himself, seemed to fill the only bit of unoccupied space in the place.

"Oh! no, don't; the house is hot enough without bringing another creature to complete our suffocation. What do you say to facing facts, Archie, and making an estimate? We are getting to the far end

of our resources, and we know the bank won't give us credit for a farthing."

"I have a proud contempt for facts, old man, and estimates I abhor as the refuge of the penniless. Why resort to such dastardly cowardice, and pettifogging measures, on the eve of a find that shall buy up the National-debt, and make the Rothschilds our serfs?"

While Archie was holding forth he was also intent on a piece of mending, which occupation somewhat suggested premeditated poverty, and belied his professed expectations; he had taken off a sock which no longer covered nor concealed his toes, and was making frantic efforts to pull the edges of the hole together, with a tiny needle and very fine cotton; the

Chum was meanwhile eyeing the deprived foot questioningly, putting his head first on one side and then on the other, evidently thinking the whole proceeding unusual and absurd.

“Thou incarnate Micawber,” answered Ruy, sharpening a pencil. “Thou Job’s self in patience, thou sport of an *ignis fatuus*, let me do thee one kind service by compelling thy optimist mind to face stern realities.”

“Realities, indeed!” shouted Archie, the noise of the rain thundering on roof and ground like a battering train of artillery, making it impossible for an ordinary tone to be heard. “I’d like to know what sterner reality you want than this. The claims will be full of water, and

we won't get any work done for days."

"The more need for us to make an estimate, and see how long we can hold out," responded Ruy. "We haven't wasted much of our substance in riotous living so far," he added, as one of the Kaffirs in their employ opened the door, and put on the ground a pot containing a stew of mutton and potatoes, from which rose a strong odour of onions.

The Kaffir pointed solemnly upwards, indicating that the rain had put the fire out, and said gravely, "No cook, Boss," and departed.

"Confounded sneak!" muttered Archie. "He wants the fire for his own pap, which must be his last meal unless this be sufficiently done. The interests of humanity de-

mand that I should have that fellow's head ; he goads one to madness with his cool appearance, he never looks warm even when I'm panting, and it's just the aggravating way with all these unmannerly knaves."

Hereupon Archie dived a fork into the pot, and fortunately found the mixture was sufficiently stewed ; so the friends ate their dinner with small ceremony, and afterwards Archie shouted to Plang, "Cook the water for tea."

"Now," he said, banging the door, "now for it, Rue ; let's have it at one gulp. I think I understand the case. This is your idea of it : We are getting to the end of our means, and, as there are no returns yet, you don't see how we are to keep up the concern and this extrava-

gant household ; you think that six boys might do instead of twelve, and that we have already spent so much money on plant and labour, and so much time in proving our ill luck, that we ought to make up our minds to a move and try some other part of the river ; you think we ought to migrate in this favourable weather” (here the hailstones beat on the roof like marbles) “to Gong Gong, Hebron, or Du Toit’s ; you think Pniel has been honoured long enough by the presence of two landless, luckless individuals, and that elsewhere we might have a better chance. Do I state the case succinctly ?”

Archie paused while Ruy nodded assent, and then he proceeded,

“Well, I am not of your opinion.

We have already cleared a lot out of the claim, and the more boys we have the sooner we shall come upon the big stone ; we did not need to plod on month after month to prove to ourselves our run of ill luck ; our object is to convince ourselves and others that it has an end, and it's on the turn now ; our first find will be a three hundred carat, pure white octeheidron ! Let me flourish my statistics, Rue ; we shall not find it to-day because the sorting can't be done after sundown, nor to-morrow because of the rains, nor perhaps this week, but certainly next week——”

“Towards the end,” interrupted Ruy, sarcastically.

“Well, I shouldn't wonder if it didn't

turn up in the beginning; but it's in the ground, you know, and I haven't 'dag' like a nigger all this while to give up at the supreme moment; we *must* find the stone, Rue, so at present there's no more to be said."

The foregoing was one of the many conversations held between the friends on the same subject, and they were always ended with Archie's emphatic decision, "We must find it." Illogical as it was, there was infection in its arbitrary conclusion, and Ruy resumed his reading, and Archie took to tuning his violin.

CHAPTER VIII.

“A LIFE IN LEAGUE WITH FATE.”

“**H**ALLOO! Montgomerie, Campbell, I say, are you there?” cried a voice outside the house, two hours later the same evening.

The door opened to let in a gust which threatened to lift the erection from the ground, and also a tall, thin, gaunt man about thirty-five years of age. It had been a very handsome face, was still fair

and bearded, which looked eagerly in at the doorway ; but it was now marked by lines of care, though the intelligent and humorous expression of the bright eyes somehow contradicted the general sternness of the other features.

“ How are you, Morton ? Come in, and tell us how goes.”

The friends warmly welcomed their visitor. He entered, and sat down, evidently worn out with late exertion ; a listless gaze presently came back into his face which quite transformed it, a wearied soul seemed to linger in that as wearied body.

The apathy, the well-bred ease, the lines on the face, the unconcealed poverty, the careless and indescribable air about the

man proclaimed the gambler, the unsuccessful gambler, who, through misfortune, ill luck, and mischance, still clung to the spar which he knew would undoubtedly wreck him at last.

Why breast the waves of a fate that is ever stronger than our strength? Thus asks the soul of the doomed man that is already far out on the treacherous waters that ere long shall engulf him as mercilessly as the hundreds of others who were weak to resist the lure, the spell, and the flush of a destiny which, even in its moments of elation, inexorably constrained them on to their doom.

“Didn’t expect visitors, especially me? Ah! does the perfume of onions greet my olfactories, or do I dream?” the

stranger asked, stooping to stroke the Chum, and then beginning to wipe the rain off his face.

“The dream’s over, and the onions demoralised; they were silver skins Hare brought me from the Paarl, food for the gods, and there’s one left for you to take back to-night,” said Archie, smiling.

“I saw a cauliflower go for three sovereigns at Bloemfontein Market to-day.” Morton spoke in a low tone always; he possessed a singularly musical voice. “‘Vegetables is scarce,’ said the trader, ‘and money is plentiful,’ and he soon found a customer for his stock.”

“Have you come from there in this storm?” asked Archie.

Morton went on wiping the rain

from his clothes, but took no notice of the question, and continued talking.

“It’s my opinion, if a certain place, traditionally believed to be very hot, originally designed for Jews in general, and now to be accommodated to the deserts of diamond-brokers and Kopje Walluppers in particular, if this place, I say, be not yet prepared, I think the site of it should be Du Toit’s Pan. There’s regular torture handy, and if it could only be turned on all the year round, instead of just a spell of it now and then, why the whole business could be carried on first-rate. I’m nearly blind with the sand storm we had there before the rain came on, hot sands, too, in great clouds flying about everywhere.”

“What took you over there? ‘Gam-bolling’ as usual, I suppose?” asked Ruy.

“You’re wrong for once; didn’t even look in at Nashwell’s; to be sure, the mere fact of having no filthy lucre was not my motive. I knew, if I went, I could no more resist the viands on the buffet than I could faro, so instead, I went into ‘The Vine,’ smelt the grease and gravy, and came away sublimely sated with odour. But enough of my experiences, where’s the fiddle, Campbell? Give us a tune.”

“Give you some bread and cheese, you hungry ass,” said Archie, getting up to perform the part of host.

“Well, I’ve got a bun here,” said Morton, taking a roll of bread from his pocket,

“and I thought that you’d let me look at your cheese while I ate it.”

Morton, or the man who called himself by that name—which might or might not have been his own, for no one knew or inquired anything about him or his history, a mining camp being the last place in the world for stating experiences on compulsion—was an unlucky digger, who, having lost almost everything he possessed in dismal efforts to master his fate, had of late become too ill to work, and had taken to gambling with the keen zest of an old habit, and now and then the luck went with him, and he won. He was considered a reticent, proud man, though his reticence arose from indifference, and his pride from hopelessness. He never

complained of his misfortunes, and never borrowed save at the last extremity. He was welcomed wherever he liked to go, though his wit often made its subjects wince, but he frequented most this abode, where association with its inmates seemed more congenial to his tastes than the conviviality of others elsewhere.

“What have you been doing at Toit’s Pan, Morton?” asked Ruy. “You look as tired as if you had walked there and back. What did you go for?”

“I went last night on business,” was the evasive reply.

“Whose business?” demanded Archie.

“Well, if you will have it, little Bently found a stone yesterday, and Unger offered him about half its value, hinting that

he must have jumped it ; and Bently was so fearfully hard up they wouldn't lose sight of him here, and he did not want the storekeepers to get wind of his find. I advised him to keep quiet till he got the chance of a good offer, and it was quite distressing to see his face when he told me he must realize to pay his digging license to-day, so I saw nothing for it but to go over to Toit's Pan. I had a talk with a buyer, who offered the same as Unger, and said the stone was flawed. Then I took it to another, who told me it was worth double as much as the others had allowed, but that he wasn't going to buy any more till the next mail arrived. Then I went to Pilsworth, who gave me a fair price ; and Bently is all right now.”

“Yes ; and very likely drunk, and you half dead for your trouble,” responded Ruy.

“Somebody says somewhere that there is nothing better for men than that they should eat and drink, and should make their souls enjoy good in their labour. I’ve been doing the eating, and Bently the drinking, and yet I think the Chum is more to be envied than either of us ; a dog’s life is, on the whole, free from care and from the responsibility of the sins of its fellows. Hamlet says, ‘The dog *will* have his day,’ which assuredly few men have, whether they will or not.”

“The Bently type generally has a good many,” said Archie. “It’s quite wonderful, too, how men of your calibre, easy to

be entreated, and so forth, minister to the glorification of these whining fools whose troubles always get the better of your good nature.”

“I think,” returned Morton, smiling, “if you insist on canvassing my private affairs, I’ll bid you good night, and get my death by going out in this storm.”

“Morton,” said Ruy, “you haven’t the faintest idea of what you missed by your absence to-day.”

“No, really. A find?”

“Yes—an enormous find.”

“Whose? yours?”

“Calm your perturbation,” said Archie; “the find consists in the arrival of an ox-waggon from Natal containing a white woman.”

“Indeed!” returned Morton, indifferently, little interested in the tidings, and, having got the Chum beside him, he stroked him, while Archie went on :

“It was great fun, I assure you ; we haven’t had such an excitement for many a day. Tom Poole brought the news into camp, and, when the waggon was in sight, a cheer was raised on each side of the river, which continued for half an hour. The occupant of the waggon must have been bewildered at an ovation royalty might have envied.”

Soon after Morton managed to kiss the Chum surreptitiously, put him gently down, and then rose and bade his hosts good night.

Groping his way through the rain and

storm, he came to his own little wretched tent, which he found in a deplorable state of leakage. There was nothing of comfort or convenience, and hardly room in which to move. All it contained was either wet or damp, so Morton prepared to spend the night half reclining on an improvised bed (he usually slept on the ground) composed of a chair and a box, and sleep came readily enough to soul and body, tired with monotonous endurance. His brain was fagged and his limbs worn, and, like many another whose life's hazard had turned up nothing but blanks, his last waking thought was, “Oh, Lord! how long?”

CHAPTER IX.

THE DEAD LIFT IN A WEARY DAY.

CLEO. “. . . Give me to drink mandragora.

CHAR. Why, madam?

CLEO. That I might sleep out this great gap of time
My Antony is away.”

SHAKESPEARE.

NEITHER Ingha nor Marie had ever confessed to each other their personal interest in their lovers, but the tacit understanding between them was significant of an alliance, and their unspoken sympathy implied a force that did not

weaken itself by words, for it was absolute in its self-denying power.

Since parting with Archie in the moonlight, Marie had been sad and cheerless, even when excitement and gaiety surrounded her. This was attributed to her brother's absence, and, notwithstanding her fears, had Ruy been with her, her naturally gay nature might have asserted itself. She was constantly haunted by memories of one wild and cherished episode, and sweet as were these memories, and exulting as she did in the knowledge of possessing Archie's love, she bitterly reproached herself for having, though all involuntarily, allowed him to confess it.

No dreams of the future could exorcise this shadow on her past ; she brooded over

it till it became an ever-recurring sadness, in which was mingled a dread she regarded as consequent on her folly.

Is premonition of suffering always given to those for whom it is lying in wait? Surely there is a genius for grief which has its dawn with the earlier years. Marie Montgomerie knew that happiness could come to Archie through no other channel but her love, and, since he had acted uprightly, it could not but be well with him, and she hoped—poor casuist! that her wrong-doing would fail to bring its own reward, as that would avert the joy his chivalrous conduct had merited.

And sundered from sweet leisure in old familiar places, while the season of fashion, folly, care, and gaiety rolled on, there was

no lack of dance and song, of flattery and fascination, but for her there was little surcease or forgetfulness, and moments came when she ignored her own beauty and grace, and looked back upon her brief dream as a thought of blissful summer when winter is nigh.

In crowds she was lonely, and would sometimes find herself wondering if, among the strange faces, one that was dearest and most familiar would suddenly beam upon her. There was not even Sir Dallas to divine her moods, and speak to her of his friend, for he too was gone to seek oblivion in new scenes, with a hope that they would erase the impressions that were, alas ! too indelibly engraven, as he found when the new scenes were unfolded.

Archie's belief in his ultimate success was absolute, and it made waiting easier to him, and he never compromised Marie by writing directly to her. He had been balked in the past, and he now meant to compel his fate, and ere long have time and place to woo. He regarded Marie's involuntary farewell as the turning of the tide, and who dare foretell what the flood shall ever be? His brief home letters never mentioned her name, for in his invulnerable faith, and in his belief in his luck, he was full of ardour and sentiment; he had waited already so long, a year, a month—it might be only a day—was not much more; better keep silent, remembering how she loved him, than by scant measures deal out hint or dole of com-

fort, with half the world between them.

Mrs. Campbell always forwarded Archie's letters to Marie, but they were all written in an impersonal style, and were mere descriptions of life at the Fields. The following is a specimen of them, and, although Marie could perceive from its perusal that Archie wanted to make the best of his circumstances, there was not much cheer in it for her :

“MY DEAR MATHILDA AND FATHER,

“I can scribble only a few lines by this mail, the rains having commenced, news has stopped, at least the digging has, and there could be no news here which did not result from it. We have not found the big stone yet, but

there's time enough ahead; I'll be sure to let you know immediately it turns up, for it must appear soon.

“We have had an arrival in camp since I last wrote—quite an acquisition. What think you of a white woman here, a person of means, too? She has got an iron house put up, lined with green baize; a considerable and sumptuous undertaking. There are actually three compartments in this palatial residence, and the landlady thereof keeps a *table d'hôte* with a tablecloth, which, I assure you, is a sign of distinction here. Mrs. Quarrier gives a very well cooked dinner to those who can afford to pay for it; and many who can't, go for it on credit. Morton tells me she intends taking in patients from the

New Rush to board ; she will have a lively time if she has open house to all the sick diggers here, for somehow they are numerous just now. Many of the fellows drink so frightfully, drink if they find, drink if they don't, and make all occasions excuses for brandies. Pniel seems to be the home of the drunken and the free ! We don't set up for being either examples or Pharisees, but have proved that tea is the most invigorating, refreshing, and cheap (the latter quality not being a consideration with *us* !) beverage during the heat. Everything else is bad, and, when men come to see us, we always treat them to unlimited tea ; it becomes weak towards the third cup, dear Mathilda, and tasteless, too, when the milk is done. I

called out the other night, 'Pass the cream !' and Morton, up with his eyebrows, and, in assumed scorn of the amenities of civilisation, said, 'Conundrum ! what is cream ?'

"I fear you will think I am writing great bosh ; but, indeed, I wish there was something better to recount to you. Your letters are unspeakable boons to us. Always your affectionate son,

"ARCHIE."

Ingha found the interest of her life to result from the expectation that her hero would ultimately pursue an art career, and this was her incentive to great effort in her own studies. She derived pleasure from many of the gaieties into which her

mother took her, but through all thoughts of her work swayed her inclinations, and in some indefinable way Ruy was associated with it. There was no hope too impossible, nothing beyond her reach ; time and distance could not utterly depress her ardent young heart. Since her last evening with Ruy at the Castle she had changed, her feelings had deepened, and a strange, sweet beauty seemed to have come into all the common-place things around her ; she was now learning the meanings of life's questions, and her answer to them all was love. Her art was gaining what mere mechanical training could never have effected, and her masters pronounced her greatly gifted, and prophesied rare success for her as an artist, if she

continued working, but this the Marchesa as strongly opposed as Kerinvean had resisted the same proposal for Ruy.

Ingha's love was no less absorbing than Marie's, but her devotion to her art gave her hopes a vital stimulus, and her day dreams were embittered by no foolish self-reproach, to which mortification Marie had involuntarily so subjected herself that the small error of her life had become magnified into a great offence.

Ingha's faith in the future was also stronger than Marie's, she hoped where Marie despaired, and could be glad when only a solitary gleam pierced the mist, a gleam that Marie, perchance because of tears, could not discern.

Society yielded pleasure to the imagina-

tive girl; she endowed the people around her with possession of varied gifts, the faintest indications of qualities above the average being lures to Ingha, and where her acquaintances were impressionable she had the power of bringing out the latent good. Winning and original, she secured the admiration of all, and not a few men, who were considered very eligible husbands by the belles of this season, would gladly have become Ingha's suitors; but she either did not or would not understand, and smiled alike bewitchingly at them all, so men and women too, perforce, considered her only a girl who had yet to learn the intricacies of the matrimonial game in which inexperience and romance were never trump cards.

Every letter which Marie received from her brother was eagerly perused by Ingha; the friends were like sisters in their confidence, though each was reticent with regard to her feelings. Never once did Ruy write Ingha's name, and when she had read his first letter, she knew it would be so. "Canna swerve!" she whispered to her longing, for she felt her hero had some reason for silence which one day he would reveal.

And yet his letters in these months of absence were her greatest delight, without them her thoughts would have been all conjecture, for it was something to know what he was doing and thinking at the other side of the world.

Had Ruy not been aware of Ingha's

future fortune, he would not have maintained this silence; but he too found hope in the gloom, and knew that the star of his destiny shone brightly. The thought of Ingha was bliss enough for the probation, and was more real than the pain of uncertainty and waiting. The belief in her fidelity was the most precious verity in his life.

Archie regarded the separation from his beloved as one long tarrying day that would bring the dawn of a glorious morrow; to Ruy hope was so real, his thoughts of Ingha so inwoven with his life, that there was no separated interval; she was now, and always would be, beckoning him to his "glorious port." It was Ingha in the past, in the present, in the future, for ever

and ever, Ingha! And he wrote of his life as a temporary emergency, and its new, odd experiences were not lost upon him, and there was always some description which proved suggestion of loving thought for Ingha. She divined that she was not forgotten; she judged his faithfulness by her own; she revered the reticence that left the past untouched, and every word addressed to Marie became precious to her, though all were of the same mood as one which Marie received about this time, and thus she read:

“ Pniel.

“ DEAREST MARIE,

“ A difficult task to me is the thought of beginning a letter to you which must be ended, and never a hint of good

luck related. Your disappointment is a sad matter to us. Archie always says '*It must come!*' And so we plod on, though I see no reason to have faith in Chance. Comparatively we are well off just now; the rains have commenced, and some of the diggers are so wretchedly housed it is quite pitiable; we, at least, have shelter, and that is saying a good deal.

"I went down this evening to look at the river (there will be fresh-run salmon in clearer waters to-day, pools I wot of!), what a sight it was! The sun had just set, and these vast skies were awful in their aspect of challenge, long repressed as it has been. Masses of grey clouds banked up the horizon from whence the sun

had disappeared, reminding me of some words of old Peter's :

“ ‘D’ye no’ see hoo sleepy thae big clouds are, they’ve watched the bleeze o’ the sun gaen doon, and are no’ carin’ a fig about it, but they’ll waukin up i’ the noo to tell their ain story.’ Above them the sky was crimson and gold, and as I gazed the lightning broke the grey wall, and every few seconds the flashes appeared ; one storm threatened another in opposite horizons, and soon waged wild, convulsive warfare, a perpetual roll, the fierce muttering of the gods never ceasing for all the sudden crashes, surely typical of the crack of doom.

“ The Vaal river is now an impetuous

flood, brown and muddy, bearing innumerable branches and logs on its breast from Kaffirland; trees that were yesterday on its banks seem now to be growing in the river, their trunks covered by the rushing torrent; how cool for their roots to have all the gush of the flood about them after the parching weeks of drought! The willow branches bend low, and coyly try to dip their scorched foliage right into the stream; they have been trying so long when every day the river was receding farther and farther, now they sway up and down, as if afraid that if once they actually touch the water the remorseless current will make the same havoc of them it has made of their poor brethren, which

are being borne down so fast through so many lonely lands to the waiting sea.

“Returning here, I paused to look for a sight I missed a week ago, the rains, I suppose, having prevented it.

“A waggon has been outspanned for many months a few yards from our enclosure, and on the box of it an old man sits nightly for hours. This old man is a remarkable individual; he has a beautiful face, clear cut and refined; is very deaf, but he has the most perfect manners, quite a *preux cavalier*, I assure you, and a carpenter by profession! Requiring some work done a while ago, we sent for him, and since then he has been here often. He makes all kinds of excuses to come

and talk. We have many strange a story told us by our Cockney friend, who came out during the Kaffir war. He once said, 'People tell me I would not know London now, but I say, if they put me down in St. Paul's Churchyard, I'd find any given place within five miles!' We did not attempt to undeceive him. One day I had left him here working, and when I returned I found him looking very earnestly at one of my sketches on the wall. He had not noticed me coming in, so I did not disturb him, and by-and-by I heard a sigh, followed by the words, 'Ah, well, I suppose I shall have to go back to painting, after all!' (He is only seventy-nine years of age!) He perceived me, and made excuses for taking the

liberty of examining my property, 'but,' he added, apologetically, 'I did something in the arts myself once. I painted a picture, and sent it to the exhibition. It was at the time of important family changes, and I don't know what became of it!'

" 'What was the subject, Nestling?' I asked, timidly, fearing to trouble the old man, and yet not wishing to be indifferent.

" 'A duck and a drake!' was the reply given with enthusiasm. Nestling lives in his covered waggon, which contains all the necessaries of his trade, and a heterogeneous medley of other things, from which people help themselves in the bland way peculiar to a Commune like this, and

which is here called 'borrowing,' though, if it were done less openly, it would be styled 'jumping,' and execrated accordingly. Neither loss nor age depresses Nestling; he is as hopeful and energetic as a boy, and every night he sits under the small front awning of his waggon, still as a statue, and looking at the sky. Hour after hour we see his beautiful profile with a background of stars. Amidst all the din and activity of the camp, this deaf, quaint, serene creature gives a sense of repose and thought.

" Archie has just thrown aside his violin and said :

" ' In the words of the immortal somebody, " To the foul fiends with the fine arts." I am utterly exhausted watch-

ing you write; you must be inventing; it's quite impossible all those pages of penmanship can be honest truth.' Fearing I may wear out your patience also, I will now say good night, dear Marie.

Yours always,

“ RUY.”

CHAPTER X.

“FLOWERS O’ THE FOREST.”

“ . . . Lilies of all kinds,
The flower-de-luce being one ! . . .
To make you garlands of, and my sweet friend
To strew him o’er and o’er.”

SHAKESPEARE.

THE scene was London, and the time a hot June night. Out in the English meadows there was scent of hawthorn and wild-flowers, and in the woods the nightingales sang for rapture and love.

Circumstance and custom held annual sway, and the season, when even the thought of crowded rooms and noisy streets was irksome, kept society together, ekeing out its spirit over innumerable engagements that had not even the charm of novelty to vary their humdrum round; and for it the hawthorn bloomed in vain, and the nightingales warbled to the fading flowers alone. The songs of the woods were melodies for the gods, but were all unheard by those whose leisure had no moments in which to listen to untrained choristers. What need for birds and breezes and the wordless music of the streams? had they not all the art of all the world crammed in a city's space for their difficult diversion?

But some there were whose hearts were not altogether given over to gaiety, to whom the vapid pastimes of the hour could bring neither joy nor forgetfulness.

An English Duchess received royalty to-night ; Court beauties, ambassadors, heroes, statesmen, and great personages from far countries were present, and the Montgomerie party, arriving late, found a brilliant gathering. The rooms were all in gala array, and were exquisitely fragrant with flowers. The magnificent ball-room was decorated with roses in such masses and clusters that it seemed as if all the roses from all the gardens of the world had been culled for service here.

Kerinvean's bevy of fair women was infinitely the most beautiful group, and their entrance was at once observed by all. Lady Kinaire had arrived earlier ; she was radiant as usual, and the Duple-Brigworth sapphires added to the brightness of her appearance ; she was talking to a handsome old veteran in the uniform of a general, when Marie, passing her after a dance, was stayed by the hand of her friend on the arm.

“My dear little Marie Montgomerie,” (Marie was at least six inches taller than the speaker), “here is an old friend of your father's, who recognized your Montgomerie face before I saw you to-night. General Gordon, Miss Montgomerie. Kinaire will take me to your people, and I will

explain that I have left you, my dear, in excellent keeping.”

The bright face nodded, and the sapphires gleamed, and she was gone.

“You are very much like your father, Miss Montgomerie; we were a long time in the same regiment, and friends ever afterwards.”

“Indeed!” responded Marie. “I am so glad to have met you.”

The old man offered to conduct her through the rooms, and added,

“My cousin lets me go where I like, and I know the nicest corners in her house; but I am quite ashamed of being so ancient to-night; it is very gracious of you to make all the younger men envious of my good fortune.”

Marie smiled at her knight's compliment, and her sweet manner made the old soldier feel that the years of his life had been brief; to-night he was no longer old.

“I think,” answered Marie, timidly glancing at his decorations, “it cannot be the first time they have been envious of you.”

“Braver men than I, my dear, have died unrewarded, but they have mostly been regretted by wife or child; none such will weep for me, and the younger men would not have envied me my liege's favour had they known there was nothing of love or hope to make me rejoice beyond the fame and glory; but to-night your familiar face reminds me of my youth, and

they need not envy me any longer, since that is lost beyond recalling.”

These two wandered in and out the gay throng, and at length General Gordon said :

“ If you will permit me, I will take you away from the noise to my cousin’s sanctum ; doubtless she has had some special freak performed there, being the place where she says she tries and fails, though we all know she is too gifted for that, and her music-room is simply charming.”

They now entered a large salon, the walls of which were exquisitely painted in accordance with the occupation that was evidently pursued there. There were all kinds of musical instruments, and in-

numerable books in the room, but the most remarkable thing was the temporary adornment of flowers. White lilies in the most luxuriant profusion, the snowiest narcissus, the purest of jonquils, and stateliest of white blooms from the orchid tribes, of which hundreds were hiding among soft gold and green moss and delicate fern.

“You admire this room, Miss Montgomerie? So do I; but my cousin quarrels with me sometimes because I don’t admire her cut flowers; she maintains that the very fact of their being so short-lived adds to their beauty, and says they are like sunsets that come and are gone, to give joy for the moment and thrill the heart as nothing can that is enduring. But I hold that to be sophistry. I have

seen this room like a tropical verandah with its decorations of blooms of southern growth, and I’ve seen it a mere bower like those of the north country, all bracken and honeysuckle. These lilies are the favourite flowers, but I don’t really know how she manages to get so many together.”

“There can be no more left to bloom this year; even the buds have all been brought, I imagine. What a lovely place for music!”

“Yes,” replied the general. “I have heard wonderful strains here, and I have often seen Signora This and Mademoiselle That gnash their teeth with vexation at having their professional voices contrasted with the amateur skill the Duchess gets

together under her roof. Here comes her eldest boy, quite a genius. George, how goes the violin? Will you play something for me?"

A handsome boy of twelve laughingly answered:

"Oh! general, mother says it is still only the fiddle; but I'll play for you if you like."

"Do, my boy; my friend here, Miss Montgomerie, is fond of music, else she would not be her father's daughter."

"I suppose, general," said the frank, self-possessed child, tuning a violin, "that it must be Scotch music. Mother says she likes singing Scotch songs for you, because you understand them better than anyone else."

“ Yes, and love them too. I’ve seen more genuine feeling over ‘ The Campbells are coming ’ and ‘ Auld Lang Syne ’ than over all the other music I’ve ever listened to. Call it by any nation’s name you like, if it has the real ring in it, you may be sure it is Scotch, or borrowed from one of our tunes.”

The boy began in a quiet manner to play that wild, touching melody “ Flowers o’ the Forest ;” he had an exquisite ear and no small mechanical skill, but the pathos in the child’s performance was simply genius. It was an air thrillingly familiar to Marie from Archie’s oft playing, and, as it ended, an audible sigh escaped her, and a tear was on the old general’s cheek as he said,

“Thank you, my lad, thank you.”

The young violinist put his instrument aside, and, smiling to them, left the room.

The general went on.

“The last time I heard that song was in the Crimea, from a young man’s lips; he was humming it while waiting orders from me. I was in the room adjoining, and I detained him purposely, for he had been doing the work of three men all the night before, and he was impatient to be back at the trenches. He was every inch a soldier, I never knew a braver, and he was dear to me as if he had been my own son. He did not know I was at hand listening to his song; but such a voice it was, clear, soft, and pathetic, and to me

it seemed to be telling of a great sorrow nobly borne. My boy was killed next day, sabre cut, hand to hand fighting, ten to one and no reserves. He pleaded so hard to lead that forlorn hope, I think despair made him eager to meet his fate. That same night I found under his uniform, stained with his precious blood, a packet containing a tress of golden hair, and the words of that song written in a girl’s handwriting on paper that was stamped with a coronet, and I buried them with my boy. Some time afterwards, here in England, I mentioned his name in recounting an affair in the Crimea, and a beautiful, young married woman grew pale as she listened, as if wistfully asking more tidings of the dead. Three months

after the fragile Countess was buried in Italy, and then I heard her story; rank had parted my boy and her. You must be wearied of my garrulous memory, my dear. You sighed, too, when the song was ended; has the air then an association for one so young?"

"Sighs always follow sad memories, I think, and mine has no wiser plea."

Anon these two were joined by Ingha and Kerinvean.

"Ah, Marie," said Ingha, with enthusiasm, "St. Cecilia has a perfect temple here; I never saw more appropriate offerings than these pure white lilies. No wonder you have been hiding from us; were you waiting the advent of the priestess of song or personating her yourself?"

Are these flowers gifts from your votaries?
What fitting tributes, my fair, sweet
saint!”

“Yes, they are beautiful,” said Marie,
wistfully regarding the death-like white-
ness of the clustering lilies, “but I was
thinking all the time, dear, that they
looked like flowers culled to scatter over
and cover a new-made grave!”

CHAPTER XI.

DEBORAH QUARRIER.

“Ever as she walks she hath a sober grace,
Making bold men abashed and good men glad.”

MRS. QUARRIER, the white woman, who arrived from Natal in an ox waggon, had not been three months at Pniel before her fame was established and her canteen recognised as an institution. Her house proved a harbour of refuge for the wrecks of which buffeting misfortune

made, in those early days, so great a number on the banks of the Vaal.

The canteen was known by many appellations, for a reckless, foolish, and absurd nomenclature prevailed. The Hareem, the United Service, the Travelers, the Life-boat, and Beulah were some of the names given to it, and the owner was by turns called the Right Bower, the Kooinoor, the Pilot, and the New Mother in Israel; though no one ever dreamed of accosting her by any other than her rightful title.

A large and fine figure had Mrs. Quarrier, and a large and fine face, too. A strong, hardy, yellow-haired woman was she, with a distinct and clear voice, and a manner that was apt, in its serious pre-

occupation, to rebuke the inertness which was too common among many of the loungers round and in the canteen.

Mrs. Quarrier's *table-d'hôte* was frequented by innumerable diggers, some of whom could afford to pay regularly, and all of whom were tired of eating repasts which they themselves had prepared. The canteen was, like its owner, capable of tiding over great emergencies ; it was incredible the number of people who could be accommodated in the dwelling after they had succumbed to the condition which gave them admission to lodge there. Men had to be ill before Mrs. Quarrier found room for them ; she had been heard to say, as excuse for refusing quarters to people in health, " Well folk can do for

themselves anywhere, and I've no skill in managing men till they're quite helpless."

By degrees the hospital's dimensions increased, and, had there been a business-like person to manage its finance, a fortune might have been made; but its landlady was paid sometimes with thanks alone, occasionally with small, flawed stones, and oftenest with profuse promises which depended for fulfilment on the freaks of a capricious chance which rarely realised the expectation of Mrs. Quarrier's debtors, though, when it did, diggers had been known to take their finds to her before offering them for sale, and had bidden her "pick and square up." And diamonds passed through Deborah's hands

as if she had been a broker, and in her silly, honest directness, when she knew a stone was of more value than the debt it was meant to cancel, she sold it at once, and returned the surplus.

No one ever saw Mrs. Quarrier's face in any state but hot, flushed, and clean ; and no one ever observed her listening to the conversations that were held under her roof. She was always occupied with her hard work ; but, nevertheless, there was nothing of importance going on in the camp which was unknown to this acute and prudent woman.

Mrs. Quarrier's object in coming to the Diamond fields had been to look for her only child, as graceless a son as ever was yearned over by a fond and foolish mother.

Jack Quarrier had been a wild, dare-devil soldier ; a rough rider, too ; but the liberty accorded to a trooper seemingly had not given him freedom enough, and he deserted from his regiment in England just when the mania for rushing to the Cape for diamonds developed. No trace of him could be found, for he was clever. There was hereditary genius from the mother in his brain, and he did not execute any of his devilments in an ordinary, clumsy way. Jack had been three years before the mast in his boyhood, and his mother had her mute surmises as to how and where he had gone.

Her husband died in the interval between Jack's disappearance and the commencement of Mrs. Quarrier's travels.

After burying him, and having worn deep mourning, wife-like, quietly and without complaint about the inaction she underwent for six months, the motherly element in the woman impelled her to put her house in order, and start off and fulfil her fate. Not that Mrs. Quarrier rose to any sublime height in declaring her intentions; she merely said to her neighbours:

“I am going to seek my Jack. If his own mother don’t go after him, I reckon he’ll have no one to turn to should ill come to him; besides, what I’ve got will do as well for two as for one.”

Deborah did not take into account Jack’s peculiarly uneconomical turn of mind, nor his unlimited capacity for spend-

ing whatever money he could lay hands upon, but she, being his mother, was the last person who could be expected to draw out an accurate programme of the future, based upon a truthful estimate of Jack's character.

For a while people at Pniel wondered if she had a husband whom she had left to worry through by himself, wondered if she were a widow and wanted to venture on another matrimonial scheme, and wondered many other unspeakable things about her; but on all these personal topics Mrs. Quarrier volunteered no information. The conjectures might have gone on in the same fashion always, but more white women appeared on the scene, and the widow found it necessary to in-

form the frequenters of her canteen who she was.

She related that she had been the wife of a corporal who had inherited some money just before his death, and he had willed it all to her. Also that she was on the look-out for their son, who had left England some time ago without consulting her as to his destination, and that she meant to search for him till she found him, and this sojourn in Pniel was one of her waitings by the way for God only knew where !

It was a very simple story, simply told in the presence of Montgomerie, Archie, Morton, and a dozen others, just after dinner. Mrs. Quarrier stood nervously twisting the ring on the third finger of

her left hand, the big, honest, kind hands that were never at rest, never at ease in idleness. She ended her narrative by saying :

“ This is my own wedding-ring, gentlemen. Once we were very poor in Bristol, and had to pawn it, and, several years after, in Belfast, Quarrier got a present of a pound from an officer, and we were pretty well to do then, and he said we'd go and buy another ring, and we went to a jeweller's shop, a place where second-hand things were sold, and Quarrier made me try on a lot of rings, but this one fitted me best, and I looked inside and there was my own name, and the date of our marriage, and it's no use for the women over there—who can't behave them-

selves in kraal or cottage—to try to make me out to be an onrespectable woman. If I find my Jack, he'll take my part."

Nearly all the men to whom Mrs. Quarrier was speaking were well-born and well-bred also. Two of her listeners had regularly attended levées in royal England; another, who suppressed his title at the Fields, had been received at several Courts in Europe; a fourth, a bishop's son, more gifted than his father, might one day have become an archbishop, but that he was far from ecclesiastically disposed. They all rose, taking the lead from Archie; they instinctively felt the power of a good woman's influence, and had no hesitation in recognizing it.

Archie held out his hand as he passed his landlady, and said:

“I sincerely wish you success in your quest, Mrs. Quarrier.”

Each man shook hands and said a kindly word as he passed out, and, after they had all gone, she sat down and wept, for their sympathy keenly touched her. Deborah was a rare creature; indifference might have braced her, upbraiding she could have borne with equanimity, but kindness found a swift response in the heart that was filled with speechless tenderness and lowliest devotion.

CHAPTER XII.

DOWN ON THEIR LUCK.

“Cursed is the ground for thy sake.”

GENESIS.

“Diamonds again. One or two men likes the name of diamonds; but not many, There’s the disadvantage about gold and diamonds that you have to dig for them, and to dig darned hard, and to dig by yourself mostly.”

FROM “THE GOLDEN BUTTERFLY.”

A WHOLE year and no luck. There had been finds of extraordinary value quite close to where our heroes worked;

even they had picked up a stone here and there from their surface sortings, but whose price fell far short of paying the expenses thereof. Their claim was now a huge pit, and heaps of boulders, slack, and refuse were piled near it.

There are no laws by which diamonds can be found: a man will work on doggedly and indefinitely in the same place without success (despite the claim having been abandoned by its first owner after months of unrewarded persistence therein), only because, forsooth, a fifty carat white stone was found three feet off, close to the surface.

Another, thinking that these treasures are concealed in remote places and far apart, will choose a distant spot wherein

to dig and stubbornly labour on, spending his all of energy, money, and hope, excavating a vein of rock, the doing of which shall be unto him as unrewarded and grievous as the torture of Sisyphus.

A third, more rare, will aver that there is a law governing the seeming caprice which scatters diamonds so unaccountably in a few acres of otherwise barren ground in the middle of a great solitary desert, though, for his own eccentric mode of obeying it, he may have no better plea than that "it looks likely;" or that he dreamt he should find in this spot; or, more absurd still, he thinks that by working up against the prevailing winds he will succeed.

A whole year and no luck.

The fierce storms which had greeted Campbell and Montgomerie three months after their arrival had died away, the floods had dried up, and the brief glories of winter, with its cloudless days and cold, clear, starlit nights, had gradually merged into scorching heat again. Bloodshot eyes, inflamed from ceaseless sorting under a pitiless sun, were looking yearningly for the rains to stop the blinding sandstorms that lacerated and stung almost to madness; but low down in the horizon the brazen clouds lay for weeks in inflexible strongholds, and sickness was rife in the camp, fever and sunstroke, and deadlier, self-inflicted pain.

Mrs. Quarrier was now so busy tending her sick in her iron house adjoining the

canteen, that she had rarely time to think of her Jack save in her dreams, though, when a patient from a distance arrived, she was always nervous and ill at ease till she had well scanned the new-comer's features.

There were some who bought ground one day and the next unearthed a fortune, but also there was a larger number who laboured, taking no respite from the slavery of digging or the monotonous drudgery of sitting at a sorting-table hour after hour, day after day, week after week in the scorching sun-blaze till the poor Bœotians had been cheated so often of their hope that to have found at last would have been a surprise not all at once to be credited. What wonder if some of

these luckless ones grew desperate, these poor, ill-starred, vanquished creatures who knew their all had gone in a losing game, perhaps the hoard of years, or the price of a commission, or maybe the small patrimony, but all thrown into the venture to which the illusion of picking up diamonds, without even stooping, had lured them ; what wonder if their courage flagged ?

Now and then a man said the work was easy and climate glorious, for he had found himself suddenly the possessor of more wealth than could have been earned by him in labour in all the years of his life. And another who had worked perchance not three yards distant for many a dreary month, with never a glitter to dazzle his aching eyes, cursed the ground

that was barren to him, and, viewing the luck at his side, swore that God and the devil were leagued against him.

A whole year and no luck !

A dreary period, though excitement was not lacking in the camp. There were both new and old methods for getting rid of time and money : gambling for the dissipated, loafing for the Bohemian, and grumbling for the impatient. For the most part it was a prodigal population, and what was won easily was often as quickly spent. Never a diamond was unearthed but a Jew was ready with his tempting gold, alert to underrate the value of the find, keen to offer and close with the bargain, or be off with it altogether ; the old Israelitish cheapening trick, which here was in full

swing, had neither lessened its weight nor changed its mode since the buyer was wont in Judea to say, "It is naught, it is naught." The Jew prevailed as in ancient days, and the digger regarded him as a god-send, but alas! luck was now becoming very scant on the banks of the Vaal.

It was luck all were straining after. Ruy had no faith in it, though Archie's belief in ultimate success was still unassailable; sometimes he thought their present chance of fortune might be slipping by unheeded, but, when Ruy ventured to hint at grim failure, he would say, hopefully:

"One inch to left or right may make all the difference, old man; we must try with our picks a while longer."

And Archie worked on, but he believed too that the "time and chance" which happeneth to all might already have passed unrecognised and insignificant.

A whole year and no luck.

The climax had come when Archie, though he did not openly confess it to his friend, felt that his spirit could not hold out much longer. Alas! that I should have to record it, that the one who till now had been cheerful and confident, was not invulnerable to the common conviction that twelve months and no luck meant that there would be no luck for them. They both seemed to be standing on the slippery edge of the precipice which overhangs the waters of despair, and the look-out was over a desolate, hope-

less region, and they were in the mood when men say pitifully of their comrades in a like plight, that "they are down on their luck, God help them !"

And the Chum? During the heat the young men ate scantily, for food was beginning to get up to famine prices, and the Chum, comprehending the circumstances, was wont to get fed at Sanger's ; he went regularly every day at breakfast-time, and one morning brought back an uncooked shoulder of mutton, and laid it with a look of triumph, wagging his tail, at Ruy's feet. He had never succumbed till now, but at last the heat overpowered him ; he lost his self-respect, felt limp, dirty, and nerveless. He burrowed holes in the sand, tunnel-shaped, large enough

to lie in with his nose above ground, and one of the Zulus would throw water over the place to keep it for the moment temperate, but when the sun dried and baked the sand again, the dog would, in a way peculiar to himself, ask for more water; but even this grew monotonous. He had been content enough while the nights remained cool, but now the state of things had become unbearable.

He had never fraternized with anyone, was never found straying from either Ruy or Archie, and up and down, where their peregrinations took them, Chum indicated by his patient, waiting expression that he was in attendance. He was always pre-occupied, never could be attracted by cat or cur, wore a look as if he were just

starting for home, and his dainty walk, as he scarcely touched the ground, gave the idea that he regarded this as an alien land.

He never had ordinary dog frolics with any of the innumerable mongrels that barked and yapped half the night through. If one of them edged up to his side, and dared to accost him with a dog's "Who are you?" Chum met the salutation calmly, and rarely seemed disturbed or indignant, unless the querist insisted on a reply. Reticence was peculiar to this lonesome creature, and the only answer he vouchsafed was a sniff and the turning of his body broad-side to the other dog, which was done to hint his lineage or likeness to the fierce jackal. The mon-

grel always took to his heels, as if he had some weighty business in hand and had no time for further parley, and the Chum would stretch himself and yawn, as if interruptions of this sort bored him greatly. But now he panted and could find no relief from the cruel monotony of heat, and besides, a whole year and no luck ! well, that was hard, very hard, even on a poor little dumb and solitary Eskimo !

CHAPTER XIII.

A DINNER AT THE DRY DIGGINGS.

“Their various cares in one great point combine,
The business of their lives—that is, to dine.”

YOUNG.

THE demand for everything was now becoming so much greater than the supply that the store-keepers were able to make their own terms, and financial embarrassment was very common. Government did not interfere save by levying licences, so that the digging population

did not benefit by being under British rule. Many of those in high places were men in no wise fitted to govern the mass of people that here on the Diamond Fields increased daily, but their salaries were secure, and there sprang up an official show of Government aids and clerks colonially orthodox, but which caused much discontent amongst those who had to pay for the farce, thereby compelling the Home Government subsequently to dis-establish this hierarchy.

At length Ruy and Archie made up their minds to leave their profitless claim for a while, and prospect elsewhere. Both dreaded migrating altogether to New Rush, but, news of enormous finds there having reached them, Ruy decided to go and look round,

while Archie, who was not well, intended to try a few days down the river at Waldeck's, and both agreed to meet again a week hence at Pniel.

Ruy started at sundown, slept at the Half-way House, and finished the remainder of the twenty-five miles next morning. Time did not seem of so much importance to him as it had appeared a year ago; unsuccessful digging had convinced him that he could reach the beginning of his life's purpose only by slow and weary steps. No marvel if he were disappointed; even although he had never, like Archie, felt the certainty of quickly achieving a fortune, he had earnestly believed that a year of hard, manual labour would have effected something, and that, at least, at the end of

it, they would not have been poorer than at its commencement. Home news lately had not been particularly cheering. Marie wrote a great deal about her friend, but the lover ever desires tidings to be straight from the heart of his beloved to his own.

Ruy trudged on, his thoughts dwelling upon Ingha as they always did when he was alone. The Chum accompanied his master over the sandy route that constant traffic had turned into a highway, which was now busy with waggons that were conveying the un-ceremoniously piled up belongings of marching diggers bound for the New Rush.

There was often much good humour among this roving population ; their prim-

itive travelling was beguiled by singing, whistling, and smoking; their accidents and emergencies developed qualities of ingenuity and adaptability of which the possessors had not thought themselves capable, and humorous and grotesque were many of the makeshifts suggested by those who were always as willing to lend a helping hand as to join in the laugh that followed disaster. They all knew, these children of Luck, though they were poor vagrants to-day, to-morrow they might rank with the Rothschilds.

On arriving at Du Toit's Pan, the first man Ruy met whom he knew was Morton, eating a bun.

"Say, Montgomerie, how goes it? Come on your own business or Bently's? Glad

to see you anyhow." And the two men shook hands warmly.

"I have walked over," returned Ruy, "to find out about things; how does it run?"

"Far, far from gay; things are looking bad with me, but that's no news to you. It won't run to anything but buns for breakfast now. I think I'll emulate the Ancient Briton and share my last loaf. Here, Chummie, it's fit neither for you nor for me, but we'd have daintier food if I could still dig."

The experience of bun eaters on compulsion is that the first bite is always the best; as appetite presses well into the heart of the bun, the enthusiasm abates, and even the currants pall, and soon

the innate stickiness and native toughness become wofully apparent, and the premonitory symptoms of dyspepsia and consequent depression make themselves felt.

“Have you got a piece of ground on this new kopje?” asked Montgomerie.

“Oh, yes,” returned Morton, “it was parcelled out yesterday; the ceremony merely consisted in Finlayson calling out at every few feet: ‘Whose is this?’ I had turned over a few spadefuls ready, and called out, when he came to where I stood, ‘It’s mine.’ You can look it over if you like before I go back to Pniel; I thought you or Campbell might manage to work it and we’d go shares. I can’t dig any more, and the only excitement I have now is at Nashwell’s.”

“But something is making you look awfully seedy ; do you stay all night at Nashwell’s ?”

“Oh no, not all night, but the time passes quickly. I have been here only four days, and I’m going back to the river to-morrow for my things. Shall we celebrate your arrival by dining together at the ‘Pig and Whistle’ ?”

“All right,” answered Ruy. “Meanwhile I have plenty to do.”

“And I’m going to my claim, and to-night we’ll talk over business matters. Avoid temptation ; muse on the coming banquet and eschew buns. So long.”

Six p.m. A small verandah covers the narrow entrance to the well-known canteen called “Pig and Whistle,” around which is

grouped a motley collection of men, mostly young. There is the lucky digger in his clean flannel shirt, and the unlucky digger with his unkempt beard and oft untidy garb; the Jew diamond-buyer and the German broker; the digger, lucky or otherwise, easily distinguishable from the buyer and broker by his bronzed face, his inevitable flannel shirt, and a certain indescribable swagger of self-assertion, inspired by an instinctive conviction of superiority, which is always discernible in the free adventurer when contrasted with the crafty trader.

A blue haze of smoke hovers about this group, issuing from the short, black pipes of the diggers and from the cigars of the others. Towering above the as-

sembly are the broad shoulders and handsome head of Montgomerie, and beside him, remarkable also for his height, stands Morton, a somewhat indifferent and contemptuous expression appearing on his features, as is usual when he is brought in contact with the diamond-buying children of Israel.

The dogs go in and out among the crowd, as if asking each other the news of the day; the well-fed mastiff and the ragged cur, the Australian kangaroo-hound and the English pointer, the Scotch terrier and the Dutch mongrel. Chief among them all for beauty and well-bred grace is the Chum, who attempts neither to rival his fellows nor to attract their notice, but jealously eyes the movements

of his master, and is ever watchful and alert not to lose sight of him among these unfamiliar and doubtless treacherous Philistines.

Suddenly the turbaned head of the Coolie waiter appears at the door. The anxiously-expected sound of the dinner-bell is heard, pipes are placed carefully in the pockets of their owners, cigars and cigarettes are thrown heedlessly away, and a simultaneous rush is made towards the interior of the building.

The long, narrow table, covered by a stained and torn cloth, is quickly surrounded, each man's dog taking his accustomed place between his master's legs. The impatient shouts of "Braised mutton," "Colonial goose," and "Boy," are

mingled with the clatter of forks and knives and popping corks.

Anon a man throws a surreptitious bone to his dog ; a low growl is heard, then a general yell of "Foetsek !" a rush of canine feet under the table, and the appearance of human feet upon it, where they remain till the riot is appeased, the bone given to its rightful owner, and the ringleaders ignominiously ejected by the indignant proprietor. In the midst of this rude Babel, Ruy eats his dinner in the imperturbation to surrounding circumstances produced by hunger and philosophy. Morton converses with him, but only toys with his repast. Food has so often failed when he could have relished it, that now appetite is failing too ; he is also quite indiffer-

ent to the excitement of the men at the table, and seems to notice no one but his friend.

Morton looks haggard and worn. He talks about the prospects of the new kopje, asks Ruy to hold his claim jointly for themselves and Campbell until he returns from Pniel, which Ruy consents to do. By-and-by the other diners drop away, their appetites having at length been satisfied by an admixture of braised mutton, Colonial goose, and dog fights; they resume their former positions under the verandah, and, while smoking, discuss the general topics of the day.

At length Morton says:

“I do feel horribly seedy. I suppose you put it down to dissipation, but it can’t

be that, for I have been absent from your benignant influence only four days. As the years go on it becomes harder to play lone hands, and, though you think you hold all the honours in the deal, you seldom make the point, for there is always some one waiting to see your poor, pathetic little stake, and go one better. Will you come with me this evening, and have your flutter, and judge for yourself the merits of Nashwell's?"

"Yes, if you like," answers Ruy, to whom the anticipation of the proposed visit is extremely repugnant, but he feels loath to let Morton, who has changed so much since they parted, out of his sight.

"Montgomerie, Montgomerie, you know, although I ask your company, I warn you

as I have often done"—he is now flushed and feverish, though his tone is jocular—"I warn you to avoid the green cloth, to turn your back upon the blandishments of the faro-table, and to shut your eyes in facing the seductions of roulette; but I will go with you to-night to set you an example; to show you how a man of resolute principle will carry himself in the midst of temptation, how he will calmly place his borrowed fiver on the king, and, having won, will let it run, my boy—will let it run until the heap of fivers has increased and multiplied exceedingly. I will also show you how this man of resolute principle will despise the allurements and vacillations of fickle fortune, and with a stern grasp will seize that

heap, and with a steady hand transfer it to his trowsers' pocket, and, being invulnerable to the delicate suggestions of the bar-keep, will turn his back on the brimming cup, and with an expression of earnest thought will resume his helmet, and go home to seek that dreamless and serene repose which always follows a virtuous action. Young man, the king has spoken !”

“Morton,” says Ruy, “had I not dined with you, I should say you were drunk.”

“But instead, you'd like to call me an idiot for wasting so much valuable advice on an unappreciative audience. I agree with you. Well, let us change the scene.”

CHAPTER XIV.

NASHWELL'S.

“Men that hazard all
Do it in hope of fair advantages.”

SHAKESPEARE.

ARM in arm they saunter up to Nash-
well's.

“Hast thou put money in thy purse?”
asks Morton, gaily.

“Not much, but my little all. Do you
need any to-night?”

“Oh, a fiver and a few sovs. would
help.”

Montgomerie is somewhat surprised at the request ; Morton had never borrowed from him before, but he immediately takes out of his leather pouch two five-pound notes and six sovereigns, and, offering them to Morton, says :

“ There is part payment in advance for the claim. You need not trouble to return it. I have enough at home to go on with.”

“ You’ll get it back to-night ; you see I have but scant faith in the Montgomerie self-reliance, and I think it better for the surplus of your riches to be in these more experienced hands ; but here we are at last, let’s go in.”

Without question they are admitted into a well-lighted saloon. On the right

hand is a roulette-table, surrounded by a few eager players. To the left is a buffet, on which the most tempting viands are displayed, and where also the choicest liquors wait the gratuitous consumption of the thirsty gambler, for the true gambler is always a thirsty individual.

Having refreshed himself with a glass of curaçoa, Morton takes a cigar from those that are also gratuitously supplied, and both men draw near the roulette-table to contemplate the play. Here the ruling passion begins to have its usual effect on Morton, a suppressed eagerness gleams from his eyes, but, assuming a tone of indifference and banter, he says :

“Montgomerie, do not forget that I warned you about roulette. Now here

doubtless you would stake on the red, but the chances are too many against you. I would not risk even a Scotchman* on it."

"I never saw any fun in roulette," returns Ruy; "but to me it is quite as interesting as faro."

"Hast thou heard of a person called Sir John Falstaff? Perhaps not. Well, he averred that, had he a thousand sons, the first humane principle he would teach them should be to forswear their potations and addict themselves to sack: now, had I a thousand sons, the first humane principle

* A florin was once passed for a half-crown among the Kaffirs by a canny Scot, and ever afterwards at the Fields that coin retained the name of "Scottismann."

I would inculcate would be, that they should forswear roulette and addict themselves to faro."

"Drunk again, Morton," says Ruy.

"Thou unmannerly knave, come and I will humble thy assurance, fighting the tiger for thee with grim resolution. Now for the surer, though less remunerative, faro!"

Morton leads the way into a square, carpeted room, at the head of which is a long table, covered with green baize, placed near the wall, with just sufficient room behind it for the chairs of the croupiers. On one of these sits a tall, thin man, with a pale, thoughtful, and emotionless face, and near him are his two assistants. In front of the table is a miscellaneous

collection of men in all kinds of attire, from the conventional evening dress to the corduroy and flannel digging costume. Nearly everyone but the croupier and his assistants has a pipe or cigar between his lips, and every countenance wears the expression of earnestness and self-control, the eyes alone indicating the under-current of intense excitement.

As Morton and Ruy approach the table, the cards are being shuffled for a fresh deal, and two indifferent players resign their chairs to the new-comers.

Now that the real business of the evening is about to commence, Morton, who is at heart a confirmed gambler, changes his jocular humour to one of seriousness, throws away his cigar, selects one of the

five-pound notes, and, with an air of fearless confidence, puts it on the king, the other players also staking their money on their favourite cards. There is a short pause while the croupier places the pack in a little frame from which the cards are dealt, and then, amidst breathless silence, he draws the first one from the top of the pack, and the dull monotonous voice goes on :

“Seven loses, ace wins,” he then draws the next card and places it beside the first. There is another short pause while the assistants gather the money from the losing card and play the winning one.

The game goes on, the voice of the croupier being alone heard, save that now and then, as a disappointed player sees his

money ruthlessly swept away by the unsympathetic assistants, he sends after it a Parthian shot in a smothered something between a curse and a laugh.

It seems a long time to Morton and Ruy that the cards come in their turn winning and losing, but never a king turns up on either side.

"I guess my money's skeered them kings, unless they're out on a bust," says Yankee Jo, who has also staked on the king; but no sooner has he spoken than, as if to give him the lie, up turns a truant king.

"Ten loses, king wins!" says the impassive voice of the croupier. The outstretched hand of Ruy is about to take up the gains for his friend, when Morton checks him.

“Are you bossing this game or am I?” he asks. “Montgomerie, be thankful to the fates that have placed your money in my hands to-night. I’m on a sure thing, I feel I am in the vein. We will let it run, dear boy, and that tenner shall be the nucleus of the great fortune I am about to build up for you. Trust in me, for the star of my destiny is rising.”

“I hope it won’t set in a horry,” puts in Yankee Jo.

Ruy is silent, thinking it wiser not to argue with Morton in his present mood.

The game is all the while progressing; Yankee Jo has let his venture run also, feeling trust in Morton’s luck, while several of the others, drawn by that mysterious

magnetism which compels gamblers, like sheep and other unreasoning animals, to rush blindly after a leader, have staked their money on the winning king. After another short spell, up comes the king a winner again.

“Let it run,” says Morton, now completely under the fascination of the game, “let it run!”

“I’ll be hanged,” says Yankee Jo, “ever I admired to see them kings before, but to-night I like the faces of them as well as Ulysses S. Grant’s, or any other president’s of a free republic.”

On goes the game and a third time up comes the king a winner, and Morton’s five pounds has grown into forty. The gambler’s inspiration of luck lets it run,

till again the king comes up on the right side, and again Morton lets it run, till a hundred and sixty pounds is paid on the lucky king. Morton bends over Ruy, and whispers hoarsely :

“Take up the money, old man. It won't do to tamper with my fickle goddess too far.”

“The money doesn't belong to me,” answers Montgomerie, now understanding that Morton has been playing for him, “take it up yourself.”

“Well, we'll settle the ownership by-and-by; meanwhile I'll pocket it, and have a brandy and soda. Winning is just as thirsty work as losing.”

“Ef I'd hed the pluck to follow your luck right through, Morton,” says Yankee

Jo, "I guess I'd hev made my everlastin' fortune instead of only this tenner. Next time, when you're on the gambole, give me the tip, and, ef I don't go my whole pile on your luck, my name's not Jo."

"Well," returns Morton, "let us stake another fiver each, and clear out, win or lose."

"Right you are," says Jo, "and ef I lose this little hitch, I reckon you'll hear some ornamental language."

The three now go back to the table, and Morton throws down a five-pound note, saying to the croupier:

"Put it on the king once more, for a last chance."

It happens that it is the only money staked on the king this deal, and the note

has a corner torn off, which is noticed by Morton and Yankee Jo, just as the croupier places it on the card.

Not being much interested in the fate of this note, after having won so much, Morton stands apart with Ruy and the Yankee to speak about the prospects of the New Rush. Presently the croupier calls the well-remembered words :

“The king wins!”

“Bully for the king,” says Yankee Jo.

“Let’s get the dimes, and vamoose.”

Morton approaches the faro-table, but is much astonished not to find any money on the winning card. The croupier is going on with the game, when Morton says :

“Hold on a minute. I staked a fiver

on the king, as you know, and, as it has won, I want the money."

"I have just paid all staked on the king," answers the croupier, "and that gentleman" (pointing to a stout, thick-set man, with a short beard) "has taken it."

"I have taken only the money I staked myself," replies the man referred to. "I put a five-pound note on the king, and I have now taken up that note and the other I won on the card."

"Askin' your pardon, young man," says Yankee Jo, "but would you jist let me look on that thar five-pound note as you staked on that thar keerd?"

"No, I won't," replies the young man. "I don't see what right you have to demand such a thing."

“I think,” says Morton, “it will be the quickest way of settling the matter, as the note I staked has a peculiar mark on it that both my friend here and I can identify.”

“Who cares for you or your friend? I don't mean to show the note to either of you.”

“Well,” says Morton, “we can soon arrange this little affair. Jo, lock the door. Gentlemen,” (addressing the others who are now crowding round in a very excited manner), “just stand back a little and give me a chance. Now, are you going to show that note?”

“No, I'm not,” returns the man, doggedly, but the words are no sooner said than there is a rush, and Morton has him

in his grasp ; but the stranger is a strong and muscular man, and not one to submit to such usage without resistance, so that a tremendous struggle ensues, in which chairs and tables are overturned and blows are exchanged. At length the crowd sways backwards, and Morton rises breathless but triumphant, with the missing note in his hand.

It is passed round after being identified, and the stranger is lifted from the ground where he has lain since the termination of the struggle. Yankee Jo unlocks the door, seizes the unfortunate thief by the collar, and, with one tremendous kick, sends him out into the darkness.

“Thar,” says he, “I guess you’d better not come yar agin ; but you’ve all creation

afore ye, and the divil to back yer little games. Morton, I reckon we've burst up this night uncommon lively, and now we'll git."

This row finishes the business for the nonce; lamps are extinguished and the crowd issues forth, the lucky and the unlucky together. Chum is patiently waiting at the door for his master, who gladly escapes from a scene in which he has taken an unwilling and unwelcome part.

CHAPTER XV.

IN WHICH WE BID FAREWELL TO MORTON.

“——Only in the world I fill up a place, which may be better supplied when I have made it empty.”

SHAKESPEARE.

IT was a hot, moonlight night. The fierce sun-glare had been most merciless all day long; the garish, white light since daybreak had left nothing of the unsightliness of the numerous temporary habitations of the Diamond Fields unexposed, and the heterogeneous humanity

gathered together on the confines of the Karoo had panted like beasts of burden.

Those eager votaries of Chance and Avarice had not paused in their sweltering toil, nor did it appear that the midsummer, shadeless heat told more forcibly upon the white men than on their swarthy brethren. A sunstroke here, and there a fatal fever, were common events; but people in health had hardly time or spirit to congratulate themselves on their own physical endurance, for the work was a hazard and the return a mere lottery, and the most pressing facts were the necessity of labour and likelihood of loss. Alas! when night, with her benignant shadows, transfigured the heaps of stones

and refuse which oftentimes were monuments of disappointment, her mystery could not wholly hide the truth, could not all conceal that these were grim trophies of failure and mischance that had been piled high and roughly by impatient hands on the banks of the Vaal.

Campbell was some hours late for the time arranged for the meeting with Ruy, and, as he waited for the ferry-boat to take him over to Pniel, the moon's reflection across the water was a broad, silver column. The clamorous and loud croaking of the frogs on the river-banks, the voices of the Dutchmen singing hymns, verse after verse, in dreariest repetition, and the still more monotonous Kaffir concertina strumming of one slow, short passage of

an air, till the involuntary listener often envied the immunity of deafness—all were sounds familiar and characteristic of the camp, which had its brief moments of recreation, though the Europeans, especially the more highly civilised, took it mostly in sleep. The excitement which necessitated this had not yet subsided; few diggers regarded their present avocation otherwise than temporary, to which might come an abrupt termination, and it was hardly yet worth while to seek out diversions, though pastimes were not lacking for those who were not wholly engrossed in their labours.

At length Archie reached Pniel, and, going towards his destination, missed a sight to which he was accustomed; the

little, still figure of Nestling under the front awning of his waggon, as Mrs. Quarrier described him, "minding the stars." Archie had so often remarked the beautiful profile against the clear sky that he thought it strange the old man was not at his post, and the night so hot. He called out in passing, but no response from the waggon. He trudged on home, but was the first arrival there. Ruy and the Chum came an hour later. Ruy had intended to write and ask Archie to join him at New Rush; but when four days passed, and Morton had not come back to arrange about the claim, Ruy feared he might not be well enough, so had determined to keep his appointment.

The young men compared notes at

supper, and had just decided to go to Morton's tent, when a knocking at the door interrupted them.

"Who's there?" they asked.

"It's Nestling, Mr. Montgomerie. Will you excuse my calling so late, and receive me? I have most urgent news."

"Come in, come in," they both called out, repressing their smiles at the old man's courtesy, which never deserted him. He was of the Nolan type, of whom his Crimean comrades say that, when conveying an order to charge, in his fine Hibernian accent he would preface the command in solemn earnest with, "Gintlemen, will ye be koind enough to Charge?"

"I have sad news to give you," said Nestling, taking the first available seat, as

if he were too weak to relate his tidings unsupported. "I have just come from Mr. Morton's death-bed."

Both the men were so utterly shocked and grieved that their answers were mere incoherent questions.

"He was taken ill the day he returned. I found that he had walked over in a very unfit condition."

"But," said Montgomerie, "I left him in the passenger-cart just before it was going to start."

"Yes; I know he had taken his fare, but a poor, sick young fellow who is now at Sanger's, came to the cart and found it full, and Mr. Morton, seeing him turn away terribly disappointed, got down and said, 'You can take my place. I've forgot

something, and can't go to-day.' Mr. Morton's illness? Well, the doctor called it sunstroke and typhoid fever; Mrs. Quarrier said it was hunger and starvation, but it wasn't exactly either, though he was so wasted the disease had nothing to work on. I haven't left him more than half an hour since the first day, and Mrs. Quarrier might have been his own mother, she has been so kind."

Nestling went on answering questions and relating the particulars of the seizure which had ended so fatally, and concluded in his own characteristic way:

"It was Vaal fever he died of. I know all the symptoms, though a young doctor, fresh from England, is not likely to have seen as many cases as I have in my ups

and downs in the Colony these twenty years. The doctors never cure it; you are in a high fever from first to last; they give you sleeping draughts, which only madden your poor brain that can't get sleep. What you want is a good sweat, it would put you easy directly, but medicines never do that for you."

"You say a change came over him this morning; did you think him better?" asked Archie.

"Yes, there was a change." Nestling's voice grew softer and sweeter. "Yes, there was a change. He was in a sweat at last, but it was clammy and deathlike, and he turned round, all by himself, and said, 'Nestling.' Lots of them have turned round and said, 'Nestling,' just at the

last, after being mad for days, but they died for all that. Afterwards, Mr. Morton seemed to be wandering, but, by-and-by, he rose right up in his bed and shouted, 'I'm on the down grade, and I can't reach the break,' and then he fell back—dead !”

The old man put his hand to his brow. He looked very pale and worn, but he did not complain, and when his listeners expressed great sorrow at not having been able to aid him, he said, somewhat apologetically :

“ When he was taken ill he sent for me, and said, ‘ Now, Nestling, you’ll stand by till I’ve done.’ I knew what he meant, and I wouldn’t have left him for anything, but,” he added, resuming his professional

tone, though his eyes were glistening, "I'm going to begin his coffin to-night, if I can get Bailey to let me have the planks reasonable. There are some people who get cent. per cent. when those they trade with are in trouble. We shall have to stand the expenses between us, since the poor gentleman can't have had his remittances regularly of late."

The three went over to Morton's tent—a poor little place in which to receive Royalty, but it was plain to see that the King of Terrors had left his sign-manual there.

A woman's hands had already arranged everything, and the doctor and magistrate were now examining the effects of the deceased.

No money was found, save a packet addressed to Ruy, which contained all the notes and gold won at Nashwell's, and a letter begun, explaining why he could not come, as he had promised, to New Rush, but the writing had ceased abruptly.

There was nothing at all to give any clue to his former life, neither letters nor papers, and no other scrap of his own handwriting save one manuscript book, in which were some odd debit entries, under the heading:

“Cleaned out at last,”

and underneath was written:

“To be paid out of the proceeds of my first find.”

“*January 10th.* Horribly hungry; went home with Campbell, got a magnificent plate of stew; never remember any repast that allayed the gnawing pangs as this one did.

“*31st.* A bundle of newspapers from Tom Poole, in which I found news in the obituary of a death which has given me relief at last.

“*February 9th.* Loan of two pounds from Bently.

“*March 6th.* A dozen cigars from ‘The Long’un,’ who said he did not like the flavour of them, which was his way of getting out of the merit of the gift.

“*12th.* A splendid dinner at Montgomerie’s, with Chum on my knee afterwards, worth the best mess dinner I ever had, including brass band.

“ 20th. Cup of tea, with toast. Ye gods ! that I should ever forget her ! from that blessed creature, Deborah Quarrier, whose real feeling goes fàr to redeem the lack of it in her sex.

“ *April 4th.* A lift from the Half-way House in Gilfillan’s trap, when I was dead-tired and footsore.”

And so on ; a strange medley of debts which Morton had doubtless meant to pay, but, instead, was now lying, removed from that possibility, waiting to incur the last obligation for which each must be indebted to those whom he can neither hinder nor requite.

CHAPTER XVI.

BAD TIDINGS.

“Then it was truth,” he said ; “I knew
That the dark presage must be true.”

SCOTT.

MORTON'S funeral was attended by a large number whom various reasons induced to show that respect for the dead which they were so chary to give the living. Curiosity prompted many to leave work for an hour, for the uncertainty of who next should need the same service gave a

zest to the business which otherwise would have been lacking.

Notwithstanding the primitive character of the procession, there was deep sadness in the countenances of some which the onlooker missed in the faces of the majority.

In consideration of his age, and because he had nursed the deceased, little Nestling was elected chief mourner. There was no lack of dignity in the small figure, dressed in a tight, dark green, frock coat, with gilt buttons, that had done duty for twenty years on similar occasions, and a large pith helmet, swathed in folds of crape, borrowed from Mrs. Quarrier. After Nestling walked the two tall figures of Campbell and Montgomerie.

The Klipdrift Cemetery was not a place

to inspire solemnity. It was merely a track of barren land slightly divided from the feldt, exposed alike to the burning sun and to the wild winds, with nothing in those early days to mark the graves of those who had been buried. Its temporary appearance suggested the idea that death was a condition where the victims had to be got rid of anyhow ; and yet I trow the Klipdrift dead fare as well and sleep as soundly as they whom marble tomb or minster vault secure, for the embrace of Mother earth is rarely unkind, and she gives the same quiet welcome to all her children.

Archie had been ailing, and Ruy had in vain tried to persuade him to remain in the house, for a close, gusty wind and

whirling, hot sand produced great discomfort, and very glad were all concerned when, the ceremony over, they got into the boat to cross the river again. Poor old Nestling hurried back to his waggon to sleep, for he had been up all the night previous making the coffin.

In returning the two young men espied the post-cart careering down the Pniel Road.

“Wonder what bad news to-day,” Ruy said. “You go back to bed, Archie, and I’ll wait for the letters.”

The sky was all aglow with sunset; far away in the west the crimson and purple clouds were piled in heavy masses, out of which fierce lightnings were almost incessantly flashing, like newly awakened

passion that would wreak its revenge and brook no tarrying. Anon the crimson faded into pale, cold grey, which the lightning still fiercely illumined; the passion somewhat abated, but the cruel impulse none the less abiding.

“Nothing but newspapers for you this mail, and no less than two letters for me,” said Ruy, on returning from the post-office.

“What’s up?” asked Archie.

“I haven’t looked at either yet, but one of them I see is from Kerinvean.”

“That augurs ill, I’m sure. He will be going to break the entail, or to tell you of some other lark equally paternal.”

“Hold your tongue, and let me read

my letters in peace," said Ruy, good-naturedly.

The first he opened was from Sir Dallas Gore, and therein read that he was in Natal, and intended going up country for sport, and would make for the Diamond Fields first, where he hoped to meet his friends soon.

It was merely a short note, and Ruy tossed it over to Archie, who soon perused it, and watched his comrade surreptitiously while he was reading Kerinvean's letter; they both knew something unusual must have occurred to prompt him to write to his nephew.

Ere he turned the first page, Ruy's face grew pale and intent, and, as he read on to the end, Archie saw a great change;

not only surprise, but disappointment and hopelessness were expressed by the drawn mouth and saddened eyes ; Ruy had evidently experienced a shock. The letter fell from his hold on the table, his head drooped on his arms, but no word nor sound escaped his lips.

Archie rose and went to his side, and asked if he might see the letter.

“Oh, certainly,” answered Ruy, with a laugh ; “you will find it immensely edifying.”

Archie read the letter in an undertone, interpolating the sentences aloud.

“Belgrave Square, April 19th.

“MY DEAR RUY,

“I should have written to you

long ago, but, having nothing important to communicate, I deferred.

(" Might have deferred it for ever with mutual advantage.")

" I have great pleasure in informing you that a fortnight ago the Marchesa became the mother of a son.

(" I thought as much.")

" And both are in good health.

(" Like their impudence.")

" I need not assure you that my interest in your career will be as deep as ever, and I hope my child will always have a friend in you.

(" As if we could associate with an interloper!")

" Your sister and Ingha are still immensely admired, and they enjoy life

exceedingly. I often tell Marie she is doomed to be an old maid.

("That's a lie!")

"She is so indifferent to attention. As for Miss di Garcelli, we think her fate is almost settled; she and Lord Arthur Daneleigh are inseparable.

("Here's the plot of the letter!")

"He has declared himself to her mother, and there seems to be a perfect understanding between the two young people. He will eventually succeed to the maternal title and properties in his family, and with Ingha's own fortune there will be a splendid future for them. He is going with us to Kerinvean for the autumn.

("This is a put up job, and Rue doesn't see through it.")

“I think I have told you all the news.
With kind wishes for Archie and yourself,
I am,

“Your affectionate uncle,

“STEUART MONTGOMERIE.”

“I say, Rue, it’s a beastly production,
and ought to have been signed ‘Elinor di
Garcilli;’ she is the real author of it, and it’s
a vile device to keep you at arm’s length.”

“Archie,” answered Ruy, “it’s very
good of you to construe the letter so, and
partly I feel sure you are right, and the
heirship is desperately hard to give up;
not for my sake, an atelier of my own will
yield me as much happiness in the long
run, but—but she has a fortune and I
have nothing.”

“Well, and who is at the bottom of that? Her own mother. My opinion is, that, even if you were not heart and soul in love with Ingha, it’s your bounden duty to go in for that fortune; it’s the law of compensation which we have to carry out voluntarily or not. But don’t you lose heart; we’re going to get the big stone directly, and you’ll be able to treat that same Garcelli fortune as I would an off-coloured splint by the side of a kooi-noor.”

“When and where?” asked Ruy, despondingly.

“Am I a magician? Do I look like an attenuated clairvoyant? Have I ever professed that my ‘open *sesame*’ reveals the earth’s fast-locked treasures? A poor

tool am I in the hands of Fate, knowing nothing but the certainty of one day possessing that big stone. Why, don't you see, Rue, there isn't a digger on the river who has amassed such a goodly number of splints, mackles, crystals, off-colours, bort, and—and"—Archie paused in his eloquence for a suitable climax—"and I may add, without being accused of undue exaggeration, and trash, as it has fallen to our lot to unearth, and that alone is reason conclusive that we shall get *the* stone eventually."

"Your faith in our luck is almost as impregnable as the rock where the stone is hiding," said Ruy.

"It will come without warning," went on Archie, not heeding Ruy's remark;

“no small stones preceding it, it will lie by its mighty self—alone. I should have the greatest dread of our luck if we had got into a habit of finding mediocre white stones which paid expenses and left a reasonable profit. There would be no chance then. It’s always the poor devil who is reduced to beggary who gets the windfall. I know all about it, but you are young in the district.”

“Looking at events from your standpoint, I believe we shall soon accomplish all the preliminary facts,” returned Ruy, smiling somewhat bitterly. “I wish you could also divine how long the beggary phase is likely to continue; it might be just as lively to know beforehand.”

“You enormous idiot! you literal fool!

You'll oblige me by holding your tongue and allowing me to sleep. I'm seedy enough to need the doctor, but I might pine myself into consumption before I'd get any sympathy from you. Good night and don't worry; there are more *kooinoors* in the kopjes than *you* know of, and I'm going to dream where to dig to-morrow."

Not long afterwards Montgomerie decided to go with four of the Zulu boys to the New Rush. Archie, being still ailing, preferred remaining at Pniel; there was a considerable amount of sorting to be done which he did not choose to depute to anyone else.

Ruy had not much zest for his new undertaking; the contents of Kerinvean's letter haunted him incessantly, and, with-

out one thought of blame, he acknowledged how probable it was that the tidings concerning Ingha should be true; their intercourse had been so brief, and two years had passed since that time, in scenes to which her experience was new, all calculated to dim the memory of the slight interchange of thoughts and feelings ere they parted. Ruy knew that if Ingha still placed trust in his love, it was more from intuition than from any declaration he had made. And yet, and yet it was all so real to him, no other star shone in all his heaven, and, if its light were withdrawn, he knew he would never reach across the dark waters of life to the "glorious port" to which that star would ever be an unerring guide.

CHAPTER XVII.

FOILED.

“Didst thou but know the inly touch of love,
 Thou would'st as soon go kindle fire with snow,
 As seek to quench the fire of love with words.”

SHAKESPEARE.

AN heir was born to the house of Montgomerie, and the news soon reached the Castle where Marie and Ingha were, and they tried to be glad as became their sex. The tenantry received the tidings respectfully, but made no effort to demonstrate their rejoicing; regret for him whom

they had so long regarded as their own was still too fresh to allow them to transfer the old fealty. The Marchesa's son was born in London, but Ruy's birth had taken place at Kerinvean, which facts were not without their significance.

Marie sternly schooled herself to act her own part, and talked hopefully to Ingha about the event, though she foresaw how gloomy the future would probably be both for her and her brother.

Mr. and Mrs. Campbell came over to offer their congratulations, but the soft-hearted Mathilda could not keep back her tears; she turned to Ingha, holding Marie's hand, and said:

“Do not think that we grudge Kerinvean his heir, my dear, but we have long

looked upon Ruy as the young laird, and we have now to reap the harvest of our own folly."

Ingha's lips were sealed both by her sympathy for the Montgomeries and her dutiful feelings towards her mother, and Mathilda well understood the reason why she returned no answer.

Ingha had many sad forebodings concerning the change in Ruy's prospects, and the difference the new heir's advent might make in his future; but she felt confident his spirit would overcome his adverse fate, and she realized how great that triumph would be. She had never matched her own qualities against his, never imagined that his heirship had any weight in making them socially equal; her great

conviction was that in everything he was so much above her that his love must always be a grace of which she was not worthy ; but now, dispossessed of his fair inheritance, he seemed no less dear, and she rejoiced that his poverty had come before he claimed her, that he and everyone would know that it was for his love alone she had elected to wait. She sorrowed with Marie when they spoke to each other about Ruy's regret, and she grieved for the people who wanted the old heir back again.

It was a large and brilliant gathering with which the Marchesa filled the Castle the first fortnight in September. Among the guests were Lady Kinaire and her brother, a handsome young Irish peer,

who imagined himself hopelessly in love with Ingha.

Lady Kinaire had not lost sight of her own pet romance, in which Ingha and Ruy were to play the most important parts ; but she had determined to find out during this visit if Ingha also cherished it, and, if not, to further her brother's suit. She was quick-witted, and withal possessed that ready sympathy which discerns motives that are often unacknowledged and unsuspected, and she had not been many days at the Castle before she perceived that Ingha di Garcelli still was faithful to her absent lover, and that her frankness with men could proceed only from a secure confidence that her heart was not in jeopardy from the wiles of those by

whom she was surrounded. Lady Kinaire dreaded that the girl might be forced into a marriage against her will, for she knew the character of the Marchesa, and divined that now Ruy Montgomerie would more than ever be considered an objectionable *parti*.

Among the guests was also Lord Arthur Daneleigh, a man for whom Ingha had long entertained a sincere liking; his tastes assimilated with hers, and he consulted her pleasure in all the favour he sought. Several times he had essayed to hint at a warmer intimacy than that of friendship, but Ingha had evaded every suggestion, fearing to lose the present intercourse with him which she esteemed so highly. Lady Kinaire, watching events,

saw how unconsciously Lord Arthur was drifting down a stream that would strand him ere long, and she took occasion to warn him, as she had so often and vainly warned her brother.

“Lord Arthur,” she said, “you admire Miss di Garcelli. I see it in your eyes every time you are near her.”

“Do you?” the young man said, frankly.

There was a warm sympathy in Kathleen Kinaire’s voice and manner that was irresistible, and to people in love-affairs she was invaluable, for she never betrayed confidence.

“She is wonderfully attractive,” Lord Arthur added, after a pause. “Such a genius, too! I think it was music that first brought us together.”

“If your interest for her ended there, if you had no more personal feelings than those, I would not have thought it necessary to warn you, but——”

Lady Kinaire did not look at the young man as she spoke; she stooped and gathered a fern, and appeared to be examining it with botanical minuteness.

“Oh yes, I know what you mean,” he responded, quickly, “but—but I don’t believe she would have such a commonplace individual as I am. She is bound up in ideals, and, when she marries, the man she chooses will be a hero, and the present condition of things ranks me amongst other ordinary fools.”

“Don’t depreciate my friends,” said Lady Kinaire, kindly. “But, seriously,

don't quite lose your heart on her, for I believe that neither you, nor my brother, nor even your brother would have any chance of winning the heart of Ingha di Garcelli."

"I fear your advice has come to me too late," he said.

Lord Arthur concluded that Lady Kin-
aire had adequate reasons for her warning, though he was too well bred to press for that which was withheld; besides, he was enjoying his fool's paradise in blissful ignorance, and he would not voluntarily be shown the way out of its bewilderingly joyous labyrinths.

Strangely enough, at the very hour when the foregoing conversation was taking place, the Marchesa was enacting the part

of stern parent for her daughter's edification. It was the old story of the mother pressing the cause of the noblest suitor, but Ingha firmly and unequivocally said she could never contemplate a marriage with Lord Arthur Daneleigh. Reasons were suggested, and were met by counter reasons: the Marchesa felt that the contest was unequal.

Without premeditation she told Ingha of the conditions of her father's will, and how, in order to secure a princely fortune to her child, and enable her to marry as became her birth, she herself had renounced the family possessions for an obscure marriage. She insisted that Lord Arthur Daneleigh's offer was one in every respect worthy of consideration, and that

Ingha's duty was to give heed to the advice of her who had sacrificed so much to insure her daughter's wealth and position.

Ingha's heart gave a great throb of delight.

"Mother," she asked, eagerly, "will all this wealth be my own, uncontrolled and free?"

"Yes, Ingha, at the age of twenty-three you can throw it, as you probably mean to do, at the feet of any nameless, poor adventurer you choose, and your father's and my purposes concerning you will be utterly frustrated."

"Nay," said the girl, enthusiastically, full of new and sudden hope, "I may do

a great deed with my fortune; perhaps my riches may repair injuries and wrongs; of one thing I am sure, I will never disgrace our family nor ally myself with any house whose name my mother could call mean."

The hint conveyed in the last words made the Marchesa frown with vexation; she felt baffled, and bitterly repented having made the revelation which served only to encourage the Quixotic notions she had hoped were forgotten. Fearing to spoil any faint chance there might still remain of one day carrying out her scheme, she rose to end the interview, but could not resist one Parthian shot.

"Be careful," she said, in almost

the same tone she had used long, long ago, when Ingha was new to the dream which had now grown so familiar and so dear. "There are people here who are less romantic than you, and they might stigmatise your behaviour by a very vulgar epithet, and I should not like to have my daughter accused of flirting, however pleasant she may consider the pastime."

That same evening, as Ingha walked down the gallery, radiant, though sad, on her way to the drawing-room, Lord Arthur was standing under the portrait of David Montgomerie, and seemingly intent upon it, though, as Ingha was about to pass him, he turned round and said :

"What a beautiful, haunting face this

is, Miss di Garcelli ; among all the portraits here I find myself constantly drawn back to look at this one."

"Yes, it is beautiful," answered Ingha, as she thought of another face which the picture so strangely resembled, to which she too was constantly drawn in tenderest memory, and of another scene under that portrait two long, long years ago!

"I have heard that your friend's brother, Mr. Roderigue Montgomerie, is very much like his ancestor ; I have never met him, but they tell me he is a good fellow and worth knowing."

Unwittingly a string was touched which the speaker, had he known, would have kept silent so that he might remain in his fool's paradise a little longer.

“Worth knowing you said !” repeated the brave girl, looking up with beseeching eyes, dreading the consequences of, but intent on, her confession. “I have never seen anyone better worth knowing than Roderigue Montgomerie.”

And her face flushed and her eyelids drooped, and Lord Arthur bit his lip to repress his astonishment; but he was her equal in honesty.

“Had I known this, I would not have bored you as I fear I must have done.”

“Oh ! no,” she answered, eagerly, “you have been so kind to me always; do not mind what I have told you, forget it if you can. I have never spoken to anyone of this before to-day; do not let it deprive me of your friendship.”

“You are good to wish for that,” Lord Arthur said, “but I had more to offer you than friendship.”

Ingha felt she had lost him out of her life, and two days afterwards he made some excuse to leave Kerinvean.

Had Mathilda known his story, she would have said it was the fate of so many knights who had come to that castle. A spell seemed to be cast on them all by the fair ones who, century after century, had inhabited it, and alas! alas! of how many she could tell whose romance ended with the vague and pathetic refrain, “he loved and he rode away!”

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE PRICE OF A PURE WHITE STONE.

“The broad sun above laughed a pitiless laugh.”

ROBERT BROWNING.

THE excitement caused by the discovery of the New Rush mine had now set in, and not only were the camps of Pniel and Klipdrift migrating from the river banks, leaving only a few persevering ones who were determined to plod on where they were established, but vast numbers were arriving weekly from all parts of the

world, forming a heterogeneous mass of population on a track of country which was a short time before absolutely uninhabited. The owners of the claims, the Government officials, the brokers, the storekeepers, and other multifarious business men were European, American, Australian, and the inevitable Jew; the hewers of wood and drawers of water, who all passed under the denomination of "boys," were Kaffir, Basuto, Bechuana, Griqua, Boer, Hottentot, Coolie, and Zulu; though for untiring work, straightforward dealing, uncomplaining service, and simple gentleness the Zulu was always preferred.

Very soon the mine at New Rush became a great Babel; a hurrying, shouting, pushing, eager multitude, working in

hourly danger of destruction; innumerable ropes and buckets incessantly going up and down, seemingly propelled by magic; débris falling constantly; human forms, white and black, moving rapidly across galleries where a chamois might have slipped; and these dangers daily increasing till the present time, when that once-unsuspected little hillock is now a mine nine acres in area, between two and three hundred feet deep, and from which upwards of twelve millions' worth of diamonds has been taken.

Montgomerie began to work his piece of ground at once, for his "boys" were good trusty fellows, and he lost no time in turning up the surface. The men were Titans who picked in those claims, and

often the "maiden blue" was reached when untold wealth was lying waiting to be sifted, till out of the eager haste to unearth large stones a trade in material for sorting was developed, and cartloads of débris that had been merely put through a large sieve, or carelessly glanced at for big stones, were hourly bought by speculators ; women also partook of the prevalent fever and excitement, and many of them amassed great wealth in this branch of the diamond trade.

Ruy's yield the first week exceeded in value all that he and Archie had found at Pniel since they had begun to dig ; during the second week he was still more fortunate. He wrote to Archie telling him of the success, and added that it would be

infinitely better for him to come at once to New Rush. He received a reply to the effect that Archie would lose no time as soon as he was able, which he hoped would be in two or three days, but he still felt out of sorts, and the doctor had advised him to remain at the river.

The following week Ruy's finds were still more numerous, and he arranged with an assistant, as it was necessary for a responsible person to be constantly at the claim. Ruy felt more cheerful than he had yet done since he arrived at the Fields, but, calling at the post-office one morning, he received a letter there which had been waiting for delivery four days. It was from Archie, and written in a somewhat feebler hand than was usual to him. It ran :

“DEAR OLD MAN,

“I have got a stone at last, but have said nothing about it. I would have come over to you, but I’m ill. I think I have got a touch of the sun, and I can’t move. I wish you could spare a day. Mrs. Quarrier is very good, but I would like to see you. Come soon.

“Yours,

“A. C.”

The letter was dated Monday, and it was Friday ere Ruy received it; he did not lose a moment, but, hiring specially, he bade the driver hurry his horses all the way. It was not the news of the find that hastened him, but the dread produced by Archie’s hint of sun-stroke.

On arrival he found the invalid very ill in bed, and Mrs. Quarrier in attendance. He seemed to be sleeping, but after a few minutes he opened his eyes and saw Ruy, and, the brief recognition of a glance being over, he appeared to wish to be undisturbed.

Mrs. Quarrier then beckoned to Ruy to come outside to speak to her; he was so stunned that he could hardly realize the change he had found.

“What is it? When did he become like this? What does the doctor say it is?”

“The doctor hasn’t said yet what it will be, Mr. Montgomerie,” answered Mrs. Quarrier, gently, “but I’m thankful you have come; for he is very ill. He can

hardly speak, his throat and head are so bad, and he is so restless and feverish all night."

"Have you been with him at night?" asked Ruy.

"Certainly. Nestling or me hasn't left him since he took bad. Five days ago, towards sun-down, he came to my place with his face very flushed, and said his head had been aching all afternoon, he thought a plunge in the river would refresh him, but it had made him worse, and, though it was that hot I couldn't hardly breathe, he was shivering, and asked me if I would give him something to drink. I got him some tea at once, then I got a bucket of hot water and mustard, and made him keep his feet in it ever

so long; but the tea didn't seem to cheer him, and he lay down on a bed in my place."

"Why did you not send for me?" asked Ruy.

"I did say, sir, it was a pity you wasn't here, and then he got up and said he'd go and write to you, and I've been expecting you every hour since. I think, sir, if I may make so bold as tell you my own opinion, I think he has something on his mind. Has he a sister called Marry?"

"No, he has not," answered Ruy. "But I have, which is all the same. What of that?"

"Only that all night long, in his sleep and wandering, he talks of her, and thinks she is with him, and once, when he was

dreadfully excited, he said, 'Promise that you'll give Marry my stone.' He waited a minute or two, and then said, 'It isn't so much to ask, when I don't want you to promise anything else.' So I made bold and took his poor, hot hand, and said, quietly, 'I do promise,' and he just whispered to me, for he likely took me for you, sir, well, he just said, 'Dear old man!' and went to sleep like a child, but a horrid dog-fight began outside and disturbed him, or that sleep might have saved him."

Ruy took up his post. Night and day he watched, gently, tenderly, and without surcease, and listened to wild delirium, which made him acquainted with facts that endeared his comrade to him more and more.

Chum, having taken in the circumstances at a glance, had chosen a corner wherein to ensconce himself; from it he could see everything and yet be out of the way; his chin rested for hours on his forepaws, and his hind legs were pushed out, Eskimo-dog fashion, behind his body, which was perfectly flat. Nothing ever escaped the Chum, and now he saw there was trouble, and he meant to give all the comfort he could by his silent attention and sympathetic presence. The various and intermittent barks of the curs of the district and the purring and mewing of the cats reached his ears in vain; nothing could tempt him to wander, his duty was here, and he acknowledged it in the stern and plaintive way peculiar to the rare creatures of his class.

The fever increased spite of care and skill, the manhood was stricken, and disease reigned supreme. Even the short, tawny brown hair oppressed with its weight the head that was burning and full of pain. The limbs became helpless, speech difficult, and the suffering was so great that Ruy regarded unconsciousness as blessed.

“Can you do nothing?” he asked the doctors, despairingly. “Is there anything that can be done to keep him living? The morphia is only maddening his brain, it is doing him harm instead of good.”

The doctors looked at the speaker pityingly, and one of them answered:

“Nothing but a change of symptoms can give us a chance.”

The other doctor echoed, professionally :

“ Nothing !”

“ But you are doing nothing to bring about a change,” said Ruy, goaded by his own helplessness and orthodox inaction.

“ Nothing can be done without risk at present,” said the more consequential of the two advisers; “ this has been a very bad sun-stroke, and is now followed by fever which is often fatal, but he may continue in the same condition for a long time.”

“ I do not think so,” returned Montgomerie; “ there must be a change soon.”

The doctors were learned and licenced, they could give the worst of diseases

erudite names, and could prognosticate the most obstinate phases and symptoms, but their regimen is almost useless in the type of fever commonest in South Africa, and which is often deadly when preceded by sunstroke. Instead of recommending applications to lower the temperature of the blood, the Faculty give narcotics, attacking the effect instead of the cause.

Chummie, lying there on the most luxurious of Damara sheepskins, resting your aristocratic black nose on its pale satin lining, as if you were accustomed to nothing but purple and fine linen, and as if you were an utter stranger to the half of your experiences, which you know have been gained as a vagabond and

a Bohemian ; looking, I take it, as if you had decided for the remainder of your natural existence to be a Sybarite or a Philistine, and not as if you might have to start to-morrow for Siberia, or the South Pole, or for any other destination that may propose itself to your possessor ; Chum, you and I know all about that fever ! We have seen its deadly raids fought without doctors, without medicine, and almost without hope.

We drearily wondered at sunrise whether ere the setting another dawn would be ours ; and if, on the morrow, we should be buried in African soil. All the while certain theories were held, and custom was defied, and the thirty miles between us and the doctor was kept un-

trodden. We meant to die of the disease, if our time had come, but not of the medicines; but we fought on the side of our ally, Nature, who never betrays, and we must have fought well, for we conquered. And the doctors say it was despite our natural remedies; but let those laugh who win, Chum! We know that, of all those poor fellows who were stricken in like manner in the glow of youth and hope, few lived; that, although the Faculty prescribed conscientiously, only one or two rose to jocund health again. You cannot have forgotten, Chum, it was not so very long ago.

There were hours when Archie was perfectly conscious, but in these times pain was so persistent, and restlessness so terrible,

that he spoke little of any subject continuously.

“Have you written home, Rue?” he asked, feebly, in one of these intervals.

“Yes; I wrote to Invean,” answered Ruy.

“I think I could get cool in the loch; it would be luxury to drown there compared with living on here.”

Ruy was sitting by the bedside, and for answer only pressed Archie’s hand. In a few minutes he turned and looked at Ruy, and said :

“If I had only bathed in Kerinvean water instead of the Vaal, I’d have been all right now.”

“And you will be all right soon,” whispered Ruy, with despair in his heart,

“and, now we are getting on, you’ll swim in the loch again soon.”

“Our luck has turned too late for me, old man ; I knew it would turn and that I should get a stone. I dreamt I should get it that day, and I worked in the sun with no shade till I found it ; it came at last, a pure white stone.”

Montgomerie could not trust himself to speak, and, after a pause, Archie said, brokenly :

“ You will give it to her, it’s all I have ; but never—never tell her the price of it, Rue.”

His voice sank with the last words, and he seemed to sleep, restlessly and painfully, and Ruy sat by his side watching, utterly worn and without hope, as he had

watched eight days and nights ; but the dreary knowledge of helplessness and prospect of failure were telling more than sleeplessness and unceasing devotion on the strong frame and youthful vigour of Roderigue Montgomerie.

CHAPTER XIX.

A KING'S MESSENGER.

"I am going a long way

.

To the island-valley of Avilion ;
 Where falls not hail, or rain, or any snow,
 Nor ever wind blows loudly ; but it lies
 Deep-meadow'd, happy, fair with orchard lawns,
 And bowery hollows crown'd with summer sea,
 Where I will heal me of my grievous wound."

TENNYSON.

FOR a fortnight Ruy had watched by
 the sick-bed of his friend, and still
 Archie Campbell, the once vigorous and

invincible champion in trials of bodily endurance and skill, fought with Death, but did not conquer. Older men gave in sooner; the fever did not take such hold on weaklier ones; but he, a strong man of moderate habits, to whom Insurance Companies, one brief month ago, would have accorded a "first class life," had proved an easy victim to a consuming disease; and now it saturated his veins with its noisome pestilence, and racked his nerves with its destroying pain.

There were hours when he was conscious, not so much of physical suffering as of mental malady. A great expanding something seemed ever to be coming nearer and nearer, widening, deepening, growing more stupendous, till its monstrously gi-

gantic proportions became a world that was about to enfold him. Then he perceived Marie standing between him and It, though the maddening, inexplicable, increasing thing was still drawing nearer and nearer; but suddenly It disappeared, Marie disappeared, everything disappeared, there seemed nothing left anywhere but a diminishing particle in space, that whirled and spun while he tried to catch it, strained to grasp it, but, oh! it was so small, and it revolved and receded so fast he could only keep it in sight, and, possessing no resistance, he was compelled to follow it to the brink of a precipice which he always fell down, down, and down, but never found any footing or rest in the dizzy, dark abyss.

And this was pressure on the brain, fever, delirium; it has ever so many fine names in the medical books, but that is not of great consequence; it was of no consequence at all to Archie, nor does it ever console any of us to know that on the certificate of our death a high-sounding title to the deed will be inscribed, while, alas! we lie unshriven, awaiting helpless, in our last mortal combat, the grim enemy who has sent us perchance consuming disease, as a fiendish warning of his advent. Its ravages on Archie had for three days been apparent enough to influence the doctors to come more seldom, for they expected each call would be the last.

People kindly offered to relieve Ruy,

but he would accept of no aid. Nestling was always at hand, and Mrs. Quarrier worked untiringly to prevent the need of extraneous service. Hour after hour Ruy watched, and hour after hour Chum watched too, either in his corner of the house or at the door, with his chin on his forepaws, alert, distressed, and silent. He observed people come and go, and sometimes, when no one could see him, he would look steadfastly awhile at the bed, and, if Archie's hand were within reach, he would gently move near, and, standing on his hind legs, lick it all over, and walk quietly out of the house, with his tail hanging down; he would then go all round the erection in order to show himself that no barking curs might presume to come

within his jurisdiction, and afterwards would relapse again into his sentinel attitude of listening and patience.

On the fourteenth day, lying at the door, Chum heard a step which caused his ears to move forward, and impelled him to get up hurriedly and to go in the direction from whence the sound proceeded. He had recognized Sir Dallas Gore a hundred yards off, and running up to him he wagged his tail for the first time for many a day. He trotted quickly back to the house, the door of which was open, and going to his master, wagged his tail again, and made demonstration as if he would say he thought succour had come at last.

Ruy went to the door and forward to meet his old friend.

“Good heavens! Montgomerie,” said Gore, grasping his hand, “how ill you look! They told me it was Archie.”

“Oh! no, I’m all right, it is he. Come in.” And Ruy led the way to Archie’s bedside.

Sir Dallas was so utterly shocked at the wreck before him that it was some moments before he could realize in the wasted form and altered features the once bright and manly friend of his boyhood, and, when he had realized how changed he was by suffering, he had to turn away to hide his emotion.

Coming back to the bed and stooping over it, he laid his hand on Archie’s brow.

“Marie darling, how cool your hand is! I always know your touch.”

The eyes remained closed, and the voice was very feeble.

Gore flushed crimson, but, still gently touching Archie, he said,

“Flash, my boy, it’s Dallas.”

“Yes, it’s Dallas Marie, it’s Marie—Marie; it’s Dallas—to marry Marie, only—only I haven’t forgot your vow—little night-bird—under the beeches—you told me not to forget!”

Ruy went to the door; the pain and weakness with which Archie had uttered the words were great; his eyes were open now, but utterly unrecognizing, and his hopeless condition was agony to Ruy. Mrs. Quarrier was standing outside; she had looked in a few minutes ago, and had perceived that the change Nestling had

seen so often was drawing near, and also that Mr. Montgomerie was almost fainting. She took his hand in her own motherly way and said :

“Come across with me, the air will revive you ; that gentleman won’t leave him, I’m sure.”

Ruy followed her down to her house, a stone’s throw from his own, where she tried in vain to tempt him to eat, but he sat down stunned and worn out.

Dallas Gore, watching his old friend, knew he was doomed, could even now discern the shadows of death creeping over the beloved face, but never a thought save grief came into his heart.

Archie breathed a while heavily, and

then sank into slumber and lay thus for half an hour, when he opened his eyes and saw Gore, but closed them again without speaking. Presently Sir Dallas, watching closely, saw him try to utter something and bent over him, but his throat seemed to be in great pain and his lips moved with difficulty, but when Gore would have given him to drink from a cup on the table, he signed a negative; he was momentarily becoming weaker.

“I am glad *you* have come. Dal, I can't tell it to Rue.”

Generous to the last, hard as it was, Sir Dallas framed the question unflinchingly.

“What is it, Flash?—something about his sister?”

“Yes—Marie.”

He looked at Dallas as he uttered the words, and with an intuition, quick and unerring, which the dying are said possess, he saw that which Dallas Gore would have given his sword to conceal from him at such a time.

“You love her too, Dal?”

Gore pressed his hand in silence.

A minute's pause, then with difficult utterance Archie went on :

“I kissed her only once, Dal, and I've loved her all my life—and while I've been ill she has been with me all the time.”

His eyes seemed to wander about till they rested on a picture on the opposite wall; it was a sketch in water colours of Marie which Ruy had drawn just before

leaving home, and the expression he had chosen was sweet and pitiful.

“She has always been there since we came, and she comes down now—larger and larger—really herself, and then I lose her again.”

The words were spoken with so much pain and so slowly that Gore feared the consequences ; he said :

“Flash, you’re exhausting your strength ; wait till you are more fit to talk.”

A weary look passed over Archie’s face, soul and body languishing for release.

“There’s not much more time left, and the dreams are not on me now. Tell her I never once forget, and I know she’s been true ; we’ll meet by and by,” then after a pause, “and you, Dal?”

Gore could not speak, and a conflict, brief and strong, passed through the soul of the dying man.

“Tell her—God help her! I loved you! Love—covereth all—love——”

“Your love—Flash, to—?” asked Gore, in a broken voice, thinking he wanted to send another message.

“No, Christ’s love overcometh,” and his utterance failed.

At this moment Ruy came in, and saw that the Angel of Death was hovering over. Until evening Archie seemed to sleep much of the time painlessly, but towards sun-down he opened the eyes which the dread mists were dimming, and they were no longer wandering nor excited. He tried

to speak, but the listeners heard only an occasional word.

“Overcometh—I give—white stone—a name—no man—saving—” then the lips were mute.

In a broken voice, which struggled to be firm, Ruy repeated slowly and distinctly :

“To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the hidden manna, and I will give him a white stone, and in the stone a new name written which no man knoweth saving he that receiveth it.”

A smile passed over Archie's face as his gaze rested on Ruy with strong, unutterable love, but he was too weak for any more speech. Towards night they saw his lips

move, and he seemed to be whispering, but the only word they heard was :

“ Marie ! ”

“ What is it, Archie ? ” Ruy asked, straining to listen, but he saw that the spirit was already released, and had gone in that flight from which no voice can recall it.

And then the Montgomerie strength gave way ; fourteen days and nights of sleepless and hopeless watching had told its tale. Ruy flung himself beside the body of his friend with an exceeding bitter cry.

“ Oh, Archie ! Archie ! would that I had died for you. ”

Could Alcestes shame our human love ? I trow not. Had Death been vicarious, Roderigue Montgomerie would have died for the man he had loved as a brother,

would have yielded up his hopes of life unquestioningly to give life to the comrade of his boyhood and the friend of his heart. Like the old crusader who, when the Saracen horse surrounded Richard, saved his liege by exclaiming, "I am the King of England!" so this man too would fain have lured and misled Death by the challenging cry, "I am thy victim!"

END OF THE SECOND BOOK.

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